

Instructions for making a homemade gel monoprinting plate

I took a monoprinting class from Linda Germain, which is where I learned to make homemade gel printing plates. These are inexpensive, so if you want to try gel printing before you invest in a Gelli Plate, this is a good option. I have to be honest though - the gelatin smells terrible, so don't say I didn't warn you. :) It doesn't smell after it's set, but during prep - yuck. You can keep and store these homemade plates for quite a while. They can get pitted from a little mold that develops on them, but this really adds to the character of detailed prints, so don't let it bother you. The recipe I'm sharing is the one I learned in Linda's class. Her website is www.lindagermain.com

Supplies

3 C. boiling water

3 C. cold water

12 TBS unflavored gelatin (I used Knox)

A baking/cookie sheet that is perfectly level - you can get these at the dollar store - you will store your plate in this as well, so it's best to just buy an inexpensive, dedicated one. Use a level before pouring the gelatin into the pan - if it's not level, shim the pan until it is.

- Dissolve the gelatin in the cold water. Slowly add the hot water, being careful not to create too many bubbles.
- When all the water is mixed in, scoop off all the foam carefully with a scrap piece of cardboard, like a cereal box weight cardboard. You need to remove 100% of the foam to get a smooth printing plate.
- Slowly pour the gelatin into the cookie sheet. Use newspaper to skim off all the bubbles, working from one end of the sheet to the other, and gently dragging the paper across the surface of the gelatin. This step is very important - keep repeating until all the bubbles are removed.
- Let the plate harden at room temperature, and then store in the refrigerator with plastic wrap covering it.
- To remove the plate to begin printing, gently run your fingers across the gelatin, pulling from the corners toward the center of the plate - you will start to see the plate lift from the cookie sheet. Continue all the way around the plate until you've released the plate completely. Then you can lift the plate out and set it on a piece of freezer paper to begin working on as instructed in our tutorial. Take your time on this step - a torn gel plate will have to be melted down and started over.
- You can flip the plate over and work on both sides of the plate, just as with a Gelli Plate.
- Old, cracked plates can be melted down and used again.