

One + One = Infinity

A simplified approach to Intaglio color printing

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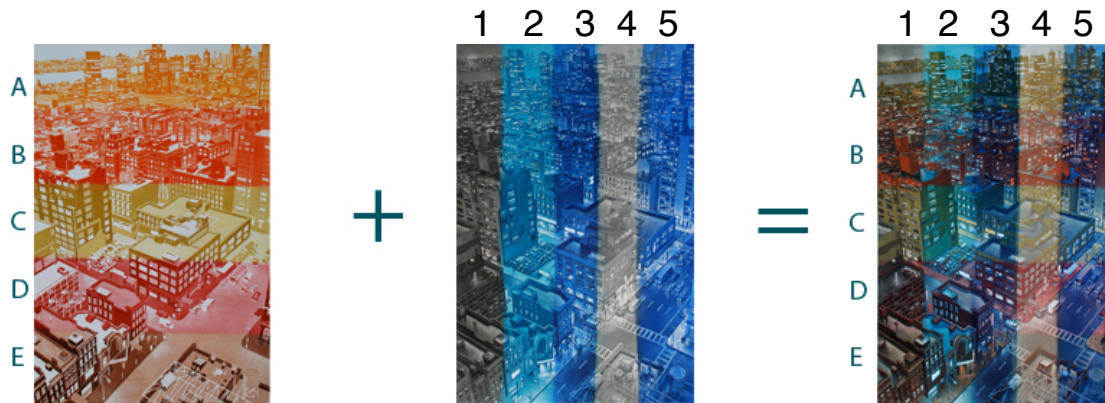
Full-color intaglio printing is generally approached as CMYK, requiring the use of four plates to achieve a full color image. However, through the use of “à la poupée” inking we can create a full palette from just two plates by assigning one plate for warm colors and one for cool colors.

Plate Preparation

To develop the image, I start with a hard ground drawing on my key (cool) plate and transfer the line to a second plate. I then aquatint the image anticipating a warm/cool approach. I make sure I etch the plates differently, allowing the warm to dominate in some areas and cool in others. Once the plates are completed, I begin color proofing. Rather than inking each plate with a single color I ink each plate in stripes of colors -- the result being 25 color combinations in one proofing.

The Color Grid Print-

25 Color Trial Proofs in One Printing



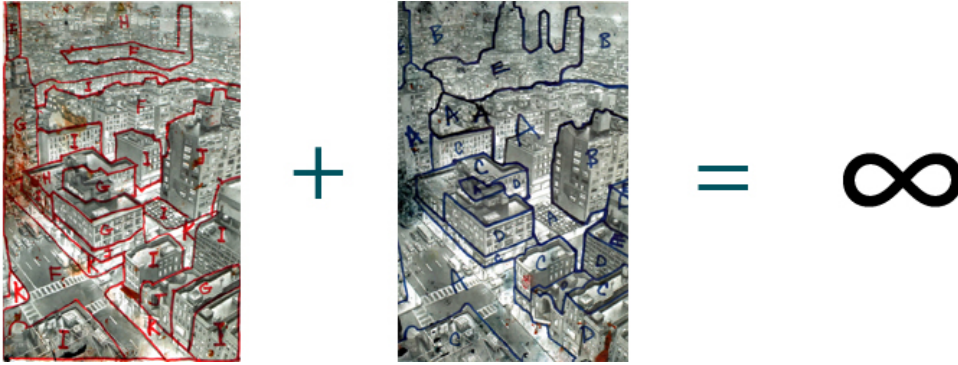
From this grid proof, I try to pick one combination that works well. I will use these two colors as my base colors for the next proof. In this case I chose the two colors in the large circles below.

The Color Palette



These became my “base” or central colors. I then mix variants on each of these base colors to stretch the hue, density and intensity range. Once the palette is prepared, I apply these colors to different areas of the plate, looking for a solution to the puzzle.

The Inking Diagram



In applying the colors, I prefer to work with overlays of complementary colors (blue on top of orange, green on top of red etc.) to achieve the effect of simultaneous contrast. After a couple proofs I am usually close to a solution. I keep track of the proofing with diagrams as above. The image is reversed to reference the inking of the plates rather than the final printed image.

The Solution (B.A.T.)



While the intaglio colors provide a relatively complete palette; after the plates are wiped, I often add highlights by relief rolling day-glo colors onto the warm plate through a Duralar stencil. These color highlights tend to be for illuminated light sources like taillights and glowing windows.

Once a solution is found, the editing process begins. I print wet onto wet, inking both plates and then printing them one after the other. Total time for inking and printing the two, 24x36” plates is approximately an hour or slightly longer.