

Letterpress Printing with Flexi-cut

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Friday March 20, 1:45-3:15pm and 3:30-5:00pm, Letterpress Studio, AA335A

An adhesive-backed, flexible material, Flexi-Cut cuts easily with scissors and linoleum cutters to produce clean, crisp prints while also being budget friendly. Using Flexi-Cut mounted on a base, one can achieve interesting flats, silhouettes, and detailed, lino-cut like imagery in letterpress printing.

The Plate

Draw your design onto the surface of your plate – be careful not to leave too many fingerprints! The oils on your hands can transfer to the surface of the Flexi-Cut, making it more difficult to print.

Cut/carve with linoleum carving tools, scissors or a sharp knife.

Peel off paper backing and attach Flexi-Cut to a CLEAN wood-mounted linoleum block, a Boxcar plate base or a Formica top block.

It is always a good idea to have a few copies of your design drawing incase you need to make replacement pieces.

Printing

If printing multiple colours/plates, mark location of Flexi-Cut by tracing around its shape.

OR

Using your design drawing as a template, mount additional Flexi-Cut pieces to same-sized bases – just remember your lockup when you switch them out. (Take a photo with your phone!)

Proof image a few times, shimming up the block as necessary – it often takes few passes for ink to adhere to the plate.

*****Don't over pack since the inked plates can stick/delaminate the paper if there's too much pressure.*****

PRINT!

When you are ready for a second run:

1. Leave your base in place and remove Flexi-Cut.
2. Using the traced outline of the removed plate as a guide, mount your next Flexi-Cut plate.
3. Proof and print!

OR

Switch out your entire plate/block for a new one.

Repeat steps for any additional runs.

Things to Consider

- Avoid handling your plate too much because fingerprints may show up on your print and oils on your hands could transfer to the plate, making it more difficult to print.
- Don't over pack since the inked plates can stick/delaminate the paper if there's too much pressure.
- Make a few copies of your drawing incase you need to make replacement plate pieces.
- Flexi-cut is only good for small runs because it is a soft material that will eventually break down.
- Make sure your base is clean and clear of any ink, solvent or oil residue because the adhesive back may not adhere well.
- I consider Flexi-Cut plates to be “disposable” meaning, once you are finished with your run, plates should be discarded. I've never been able to successfully clean flexi and they don't keep well once they've been used for printing.
- It is also a good idea to make doubles of your plates if you plan on printing editions of 20 or more. That way you have a back up if your plate breaks or stops taking ink in the middle of your run.
- Speedball also makes a flexible printing plate similar to Flexi-Cut but it is a harder material, making it more difficult to cut with scissors. BUT they can be cleaned, take pressure well, and parts can be saved and re-used. Another BUT – they cost twice as much as flexi.

Resources

Where to buy Flexi-Cut:

www.dickblick.com (sold in sheets)

www.essentialartproducts.com (sold in sheets and rolls)

www.dharmatrading.com (sold in sheets)

Manufacturers:

www.inovart.net (makers of Flexi-Cut)

www.speedballart.com (also makes a flexible printing plate similar to Flexi-Cut)

Bases:

Formica-top blocks (www.dickblick.com/products/blick-formica-top-blocks)

Block mounted linoleum (available at most art supply stores)

Boxcar Base (www.boxcarpress.com/boxcar-base)

Eluminum Base (www.letterpressplates.com/bases-supplies)

And, of course, you could fashion your own base.