

# Modifying photopolymer (solar) plates with acrylic media.

Less-than-perfect polymer plates can be readily rectified by modifying the plate surface using acrylic media.

A small section of the plate can be transformed, as in the example “Camellia” (below); or for a more complete overhaul, the original plate may be covered in gesso and reworked.



“Camellia” before



“Camellia” after

The original plate was overexposed resulting in a loss of contrast between foreground and background (see “Camellia’ before”). This was easily recovered however, by adding pastel primer to the plate in the areas where more ink was required, resulting in a darker final print with better contrast. (see “Camellia’ after”).

## Technique:

- Washing the plate first will help the acrylic media to form a good bond with the surface. Clean ink off the plate with vegetable oil then using a soft brush or cleaning mitt and a little detergent with water gently work the surface until all ink and greasiness is removed, rinse and dry with a towel. Surface is now ready to apply acrylic media.
- Use various acrylic media eg: gesso, pastel primer, acrylic varnishes, PVC glue and gel medium etc. Art suppliers carry a huge range of these media and you may already have quite a few types.
- Carborundum or ground pumice mixed with or sprinkled onto gesso or PVC glue will give a finish with “tooth” for darker areas similar to the pastel primer used above in “Camellia”.
- The medium can be painted, applied with a palette knife or other implement and drawn into to create lines and textures.
- The surface can be built up by gluing a variety of low relief textural materials – such as paper or fabric using PVC glue, seal the surface with watered gesso or varnish.
- Once the desired finish is achieved dry the plate thoroughly with a hairdryer or air-dry overnight at room temperature. To speed the process use an oven at a very low temperature, 50-60 centigrade, no higher or the plate may dry out too much and crack. The plate must be completely dry before inking to avoid the paper sticking during printing.
- Apply ink with a short stiff brush, wipe with a small flat piece of tarlatan and finish with a paper wipe. Buy cheap flat bristle brushes and cut bristles short with scissors.

**Plate being modified with pastel primer and gesso**



Clear pastel primer was added for dark areas, and gesso thinned with water painted over the leaves.

## Cicada

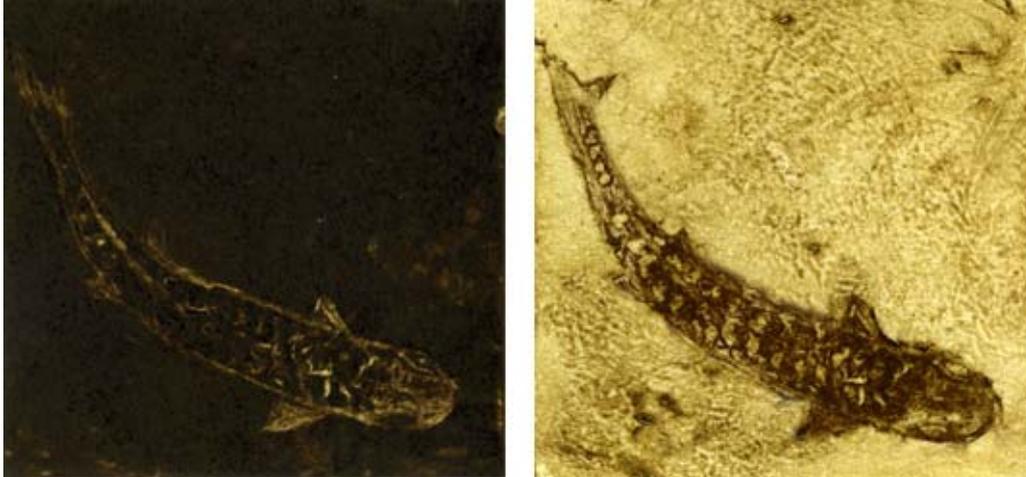


The sky in the print on the right was lightened using gloss varnish on the plate, "Cicada"



Wash the plate with a soft brush or cleaning mitt in water to clean thoroughly. Gloss varnish, thinned with water, applied to sky areas to lighten. Keep the print nearby while you work and refer to areas you wish to change.

## Fossil Fish



Before and after



Plate showing tissue glued to the surface with some thinned gesso & gloss varnish added over the paper

The fish plate was too dark. I covered the background in PVC glue and attached tissue paper. A thin coat of gesso and thinned gloss medium was applied. In retrospect, the paper layer might have been more successful if I had used crushed or textured paper and added gesso applied with a palette knife for more interesting textural effects.

#### **Notes:**

- Art Spectrum Colourfix pastel primer was originally designed for coating a surface in preparation for pastel drawing but is great medium for our purposes as it holds ink where we need darker areas
- Try experimenting with various acrylic media and pasting in paper and textiles etc. The plate becomes a collagraph when you add media to the surface.
- Sometimes it is difficult to find where you need to apply the medium - outline areas you are modifying in ballpoint pen, makes it easy to see and will not show on the final print.