Creating Films For Printmaking
Autographic (Hand Drawn) Films

Introduction

Hand-drawn positive films can be used across all photo-based printmaking media including photopolymer gravure, screenprinting, and photo lithography. In the case of screenprinting, as with digital films, hand drawn films must be totally opaque to stop the UV light. However, processes such as photo lithography and photopolymer gravure are capable of reproducing lighter tones and subtle texture that expands the possibilities of working with autographic films.

Working with Frosted Mylar or Drafting Film

The two most commonly used films are Tru Grain; a high quality frosted mylar that can be purchase online from suppliers such as intaglioprintmaker. And Drafting Film; a single matt film available in 3 sizes directly through the Printmaking Store.

Tru Grain is a high quality textured polyester film which holds tone. Its unique textured surface and very high level of transparency allows the reproduction of very subtle washes and marks without the intermediate stage of phography or laser scanning. Tru Grain works well with Chinagraph, Litho Crayons and Indian ink, however it is an expensive choice and may not yield the desired results when screenprinting.

Drafting Film is a good quality economy film, it has little texture and is not so transparent. It is better and more economical for producing flat areas with little tonal value or bold textures. It is relatively cheap and suitable for screenprinting as well as lithography and photopolymer gravure, however it is not as coarse as that of TruGrain film and owes itself more to graphic work than fine detail.

The following materials work best for hand drawing opaque images:

Micron Pens, India Ink, Chinagraph, Litho Crayons, Black Acrylic Paint and Black or Red Posca pens which are available in a range of sizes.

After you complete your drawing it is best to hold it up to a light or place it on a light box to check it is opaque enough. It may be best to draw over it a second time to assure that it is opaque.