

# BLOCK PRINTING 604610 Block Print Your Own Fabric User Guide



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## BLOCK PRINTING textiles and paper

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On ancient cave walls we can see the first examples of printing. Using earth pigments and a hand, Paleolithic man began reproducing their own hand prints and other simple images. This immediate and dynamic transferal of design is still used today in block printing. From basic potato prints to fine wood blocks our modern imaginations are inspired.

Over the centuries, block printing developed into a universal method of decorating textiles and paper, and around the globe we can find it's unique traditions. For instance, in India during the first millennia a unique method of block printing on textiles with wood blocks and natural dyes was developed. The intricate patterns and dye recipes were passed down from generation to generation and continue to be used today.

Block printing remains presently an artistic and efficient means of applying design and repeating patterns on textiles and paper. Quicker and faster methods of printing have also been developed but the expression and heritage of a hand worked block print is not easily reproduced with machinery.



## **MAKE A BLOCK**

- Create a simple block out of anything that will make a mark. Look around, allow your imagination to soar. Cross sections of fruit and vegetable produce wonderful images. Found objects from both home and nature are always surprising. Sponges, seashells, bark, leaves, toys, bolts, bottle caps, potato mashers, are just a few ideas.
- Create textural prints by making blocks with a raised surface. Glue materials like burlap, dish scrubbers, heavy

twine or foam onto a base block of wood or plexiglass.

- Loose, non-graphic prints can be made with simple relief blocks made out of styrofoam or foam. Just melt away unwanted areas of the styrofoam with the tip of a hot glue gun (without the glue).
- Bold patterns can be achieved using a simple carved block made out of a cut potato, eraser or dense foam. Carve away the negative space with a knife.
- Intricate images and fine detail prints can be created with blocks made out of linoleum or a material that we at Maiwa call 'softoleum'. First trace your design onto tracing paper using a soft lead pencil. Flip this drawing over and rub the marks onto the carving material. The transferred image will be appropriately backward. Carve away the areas you don't want to print with sharp 'lino' carving tools.

## **WHAT TO PRINT**

Block printing can be done on many different surfaces: textiles, paper, walls, furniture, tiles, ceramics, wood, etc. It is important to choose the appropriate printing medium for the surface you have chosen. When printing on cloth it is possible to use fabric paint, thickened dyes and thickened discharge paste (follow the applicable thickening and setting instructions for each medium). Acrylic paint is a good choice for paper. It can also be an option when printing on untreated wood, terra cotta and surfaces such as walls painted with water soluble paint. Please note that it is sometimes necessary to protect these latter prints with a coat of varnish.

**TIP:** Apply more than one colour to your block to achieve blended colour prints.

## **HOW TO PRINT**

Prepare the table by fixing a cushioning material to it. A folded towel or large piece of neoprene works well. For a clear sharp edged images, smoothly fill a sponge roller with paint. Roll paint gently over the surface of the block. Take care not to squish paint into fine intricate lines, this causes blurred details. Position the block on the fabric or paper and firmly stamp the block. Soft blocks like softoleum need to have pressure applied with fingers to all areas of the block. Hard blocks like wood sometimes work well with a slight bang of a fist in the centre. A rugged uneven print can be produced by stamping a block directly into paint on a tray, this colour can then be transferred to the fabric or paper. This technique works well with simple, bold blocks.

**TIP:** Let your first layers dry before printing on top of them. This will give you strong clear colours.

See the various Maiwa Handprints data sheets for information on thickening and setting dyes, setting fabric paint and creating discharging pastes and resists for block printing.

## **INDIAN WOODEN BLOCKS**

These incredibly intricate hand carved works of art are a joy to print with. Near perfection in carving and design makes printing repeats and complicated overlays easy. Each block will carry its own clues for registration so intimate knowledge and practice with each block will lead you to successful printing.

A border block will repeat horizontally and a body block will repeat both horizontally and vertically. Look for registration indicators carved into the block to help you repeat accurately. A registration mark could be a half leaf, portion of a figure or just an open space that might fit an obvious part of the design.

Overlaying block sets are used to create multicoloured prints with precise outlines. Each block is used for a different colour and the most intricate block is the outline. For good registration try printing with the most intricate block first, using a colour similar to what you are printing on. This camouflaged print will serve as registration lines for you to fit in the other block colours easily, then print again the most intricate block with a contrasting colour outlining the other colors and covering up your first print.

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## Documents / Resources



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## References

- [User Manual](#)

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