

Painting 1: Understanding Painting Media

Part three

Monotype portraits with paint



Yuko Nasu, *Man*, 2007 (oil on canvas)

Use the grid below to keep track of your progress throughout Part Three.

Exercise	Page	Complete
3.1	75	
3.2	75	
3.3	75	
3.4	75	

Introduction

You'll spend most of your time on Part Three making monotypes. The term monotype or monoprint refers to their one-off nature. There are a number of different ways to make monotypes. Part Three will take you through a very 'painterly' way of using them – a way that lets you capture your unique brushstrokes and helps you to understand oil paint in a particular way. You'll discover how you can manipulate the consistency of your paint, the amount of paint removal, and the amount of painting on top of the print, to determine the nature of your final image.

A number of contemporary artists use similar techniques to those you'll be practising:

- When Yuko Nasu moved from Japan to Britain, she found looking at westerners confusing. She makes paintings that employ thin layers of oil paint and she then wipes away at the image with a turps-covered rag. This is a method that you can employ with the monotype, as you'll see later. The blurring creates an unsettling feeling in the viewer and is reminiscent of portraits by Henry Tonks.
- Eleanor Moreton has created a series of oil paintings of her female heroes such as author Rebecca West. Moreton, like Nasu, smears paint to create movement. You can see the way that Moreton has depicted West's clothing – wiped with a thick brush, with diluted paint. This kind of brushstroke would be easy to achieve and effective on a monotype.
- Kim Edwards works from drawings and photographs of the Suffolk coast. She uses thick, opaquely painted oil paint to create her monotypes and admits to a lot of trial and error and over-painting.



Eleanor Moreton, *Rebecca West* (oil on canvas)



Research point

Do your own research into the artists discussed above and any other artists you can find, historic or contemporary, who have worked with monotype or with loose paint, in particular to create portraits.

Artists who have used loose paint in much the same way that you will include Annie Kevans, Kim Baker, Alli Sharma, Eleanor Moreton, Geraldine Swayne, David Bomberg, Diego Velázquez and Édouard Manet.

Kim Baker uses very diluted oil paint on canvas, board and paper. She creates dark backgrounds and works onto them with lighter paint. This is something you might like to try when creating your monotypes.

Annie Kevans uses very thin paint and paints onto oil-primed paper and un-sized paper. This use of paper, especially the un-sized sort, makes the image blur and creates a natural, fluid look which belies her rigorous observation.

Optional supplementary reading:
One Thousand Drawings by Tracey Emin (2009, New York: Rizzoli) shows Emin's monotype drawings.

Drawing the Line: Reappraising Drawing Past and Present, by Michael Craig Martin (1995, London: Hayward Gallery). The essay in this book discusses the ways in which different media communicate different ideas.



Annie Kevans, *Adolf Hitler*, 2004 (oil on paper)

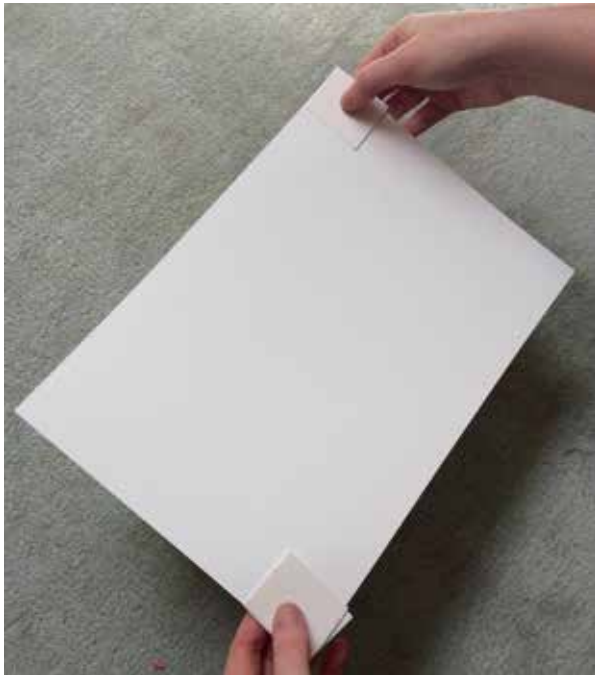
How to make a monotype

The best kind of paint to use for this is oil paint. Oil paint is thick enough for the process to produce striking, vivid images and, unlike acrylic or other water-based paint, it stays wet long enough to change and move on the glass or Perspex before making the final print.

You'll need a piece of glass with smoothed edges/Perspex/thick acetate/plastic. You'll get the best results with glass; this is also the surface that's easiest to clean, most long-lasting and least likely to scratch. You can get this at a local glasscutter. A5 size is good to start with, using A4 size paper to print on.

The oil paint needs to be fluid and pretty sloppy. This is a process where trial and error will lead the way so have a stack of pieces of A4 paper at the ready.

It's useful to make little paper fingertip protectors to pick the paper up with. This is a technique that printers use and helps to keep prints clean.



In Part Four, you'll be using thick paint and painting impasto. The monotype is a good introduction to using impasto as you have to use paint in a loose fluid way and get quite a lot of paint (thinned with a medium) loaded onto your brush.

You can thin your paint with:

- Liquin
- Zest-it
- turpentine
- white spirit.

You can use linseed oil but it will make the print go see-through; if you do use it, use in moderation

Start by preparing your ground. Do you want the image to be landscape or portrait? How will your image work best? Place your found image (photo/photocopy/clipping/printout) under your chosen surface (glass/acetate/Perspex).



If you're using acetate or thinnish Perspex you'll find it helpful to use masking tape to tape it to a firm surface like a table top or a big heavy book.

Give your surface a quick wipe over with turps/white spirit and wait for it to evaporate.

You can also use the masking tape to mark up where your A4 piece of paper will go, or to 'register' the paper. Make a right angle with two pieces of masking tape at two diagonal corners. You could do this lightly with pencil marks too. It's good to get the paper equal on the top and sides and very slightly lower at the bottom.

Get your thinner ready. Squeeze out small (5p size) blobs of your oil paint and mix with the brush you want to use. A rounded-edge shaped brush, a small brush and long pointy brushes will all be good.

Paint over your image, mixing your paint with your thinning medium. If your paint is too thick and you want to see your image below, have a cotton bud at the ready to remove bits of paint. You can draw/paint by removing areas of paint with a rag/cotton wool/cotton bud/tissue paper too; you'll be doing this in Exercise 3.3.



Annabel Dover, *Patient* (monotype)



Paint onto the glass, with the image beneath the glass.



Stop when you feel you've painted enough onto the glass.



Wipe the edges clean before printing the image.

Once you've covered the whole surface, use your paper tweezers to hold your paper above the painted surface. Work out where you'd like to place it and gently press it onto the painted surface. If you wish, use a piece of tissue paper to protect the back of your print



Protect with tissue paper.



Use your hand or a baren to press.

Press down with the flat of your hand or with a special tool called a baren, available from Intaglio (see the list of suppliers at the end of this course guide). You can easily make your own baren from layers of cut magazine pages.

When you press the paper try to cover all areas, going across, down and diagonally in both directions. To get an indented printed look, really press the paper over the edges of your surface.

Then, using your paper tweezers, peel the paper away holding the top two corners. If you want you can now work into the paint some more, putting details on, adding areas and taking bits away. You'll also be able to tell if you need to have the paint more fluid or if you need more of it. Once you've worked through the exercises you'll have more of an idea of the kinds of images you can create and how you can manipulate them.

Clean the image with a rag and turps or similar. Make sure that the turps is all wiped off the glass, otherwise the next print will be very blurry.



Peel away gently from the top two corners using your paper tweezers.



This print could do with more paint to create a clearer image. You can manipulate the print depending on what you want.



Painting on top of the image can change, define, darken or lighten the image.



Clean the image.



Annabel Dover (monotype)

Exercise 3.1

Look in a mirror and make 20 A4 ink studies of your face. Have three cups to hand: one of black undiluted ink, one of diluted ink (with water), and one of water. Use a mid-sized soft brush and spend no longer than a minute on each painting.

Remember to squint to see the tones. Try this in different light levels. Near-darkness can really help you to capture a lot of different tones. For inspiration you might like to look at the paintings of Marlene Dumas.

HP watercolour paper is good for this exercise but, as these are sketches, cartridge paper, card, photocopier paper, or any other scrap paper, is fine. You'll use these images as the basis of your monotypes in the following exercises.

Exercise 3.2

Choose an image to work from. This can be one of the ink studies you made in Exercise 3.1, a photograph, or a magazine image of a face. Try the monotype technique described above and see how it goes. It may take you a while to get it right so don't panic if things don't go well first time. Don't throw anything away! While you are working think about the following. Do you need to mix the paint with more white spirit/turps? Or less? Where would you like to remove bits to create a highlight or definition? Which bits would you like to paint onto after you've created the print? Carry on until you've made five images you are happy with.

Exercise 3.3

Make five more portrait monotype prints, this time removing different areas of paint with cotton buds, cotton wool, smooth rags, rough rags or tissue paper.



Kim Edwards (monotype)

Exercise 3.4

Choose three of the prints you made in Exercises 3.2 and 3.3. Work into these prints with extra paint to change the image. You could choose to pursue greater definition, a closer likeness or a more dramatic contrast. Think about how you could apply the paint to achieve these effects.

Make notes as you work through the exercises, noting down the different effects you've been able to achieve by removing more/less paint, adding extra paint, etc.

Reviewing your work for Part Three

Trial and error is inherent in the monotype process and your successes and failures will be very useful to note in your learning log. These experiments can be useful for developing your work; you can transfer the techniques you've acquired to other projects using different media.

Turn back to the end of Part One and use the ideas there to help you think about how you can link your work on Part Three to the assessment criteria.

Now that you've reached the end of Part Three, you should also be starting to think about the written work you'll submit as part of Assignment Five. You'll be asked to decide on a painting medium that interests or appeals to you in some way – perhaps because you use it in your own work – and write about how a historic and a contemporary practitioner use this technique in their work. Has the work you've done in Part Three given you any ideas for this written project? Make some notes in your learning log.



Natalie Dowse (monotype)

Assignment three

Monotype portraits

Now that you have more of a grasp of the monotype process, create three monotypes that encompass the techniques you feel work the best to create the kind of self-portrait or portrait images you want. Think about what you want to communicate with these images and how your use of paint will enable this.

Arrange the finished prints in different ways and photograph them. Before you do this, have a look at the work of Annie Kevans, Yuko Nasu, Luc Tuymans, Eleanor Moreton and Chantal Joffe to see how their series of portraits work as a whole as well as individually.

Send to your tutor by whatever means you've agreed:

- your final three prints
- photographs of your various arrangements
- a selection of work from the exercises in Part Three
- the relevant pages of your learning log or your blog url.

In your learning log, reflect on your three monotypes. Which is the most successful and why? How did you manipulate the monotype technique to achieve the effect you were after? If you were to develop this work, how would you do it? Which artists have influenced you and how? Reflect on the ways you'd like to develop your work and the essence of what you hope to communicate.

Reflection

Remember to revisit the assessment criteria listed at the start of this course guide. Think about how well you've done against the criteria and make notes in your learning log.

Reworking your assignment

Following feedback from your tutor, you may wish to rework some of your assignment, especially if you are ultimately submitting your work for formal assessment. If you do this, make sure you reflect on what you have done, and why, in your learning log.



Annie Kevans, *David Bowie and Madonna*, 2014 (oil on paper)