

Lascaux Acrylic-resist etching (ARE)

The growing awareness of the damage caused to artists' health and the environment by the use of toxic art materials has led intaglio printmakers to search for safer ways of working. Lascaux, working in collaboration with the printmakers Robert Adam and Carol Robertson, have developed a complete range of safer modern materials which can be used to replace the traditional acid resists.

These reliable new acrylic resists have been carefully designed to provide all the marks associated with traditional materials as well as relating closely to classical working methods. A innovative vocabulary of painterly marks has also become possible due to the versatility of the new materials. The water-soluble resists are easily applied with artists' brushes and tools and can be cleaned up with soapy water. They can be used on copper, brass, zinc, aluminium and mild steel. The prepared etching plates may be new or previously bitten. Lascaux resists can be used in combination with each other and are compatible with photopolymer resists such as Photec (see technical sheet for Lascaux Tusches). They dry quickly and become powerful acid resists with the ability to sustain long etches in a range of mordants. After etching they can be easily and economically removed from the plate with Lascaux Remover. The etched plates may be worked further or printed with water-based inks or oil-based inks. Some of the resists can also be used for intaglio collagraph methods.

Lascaux Plate-Backing resist

This tough scratch-resistant coloured resist is painted onto the back and edges of the plate to prevent any biting during the etching process.

Lascaux Soft resist

This slower drying resist is designed to offset easily and is used to make soft crayon- or pencil-like drawings, textures from collages and direct broad line drawings.

Lascaux Stop-out resist

This coloured stop-out is easy and pleasant to paint with and can be drawn into with etching tools when it is dry. It is used to make images on the plate, stop-out lines when step-biting, and to edit or correct plates.

Lascaux Wash resist

This coloured granular resist is painted on the plate and used in conjunction with Lascaux Spray/aquatint to create unusual etched effects similar to watercolour or tusche washes.

Lascaux Hard resist

This resist is painted onto the plate in a thin even layer with a soft flat square-ended brush. When this clear layer is dry it may be coloured or drawn into with etching needles, roulettes and steel wool. The waxy character allows the needle to glide through its surface. After drawing the coloured coating (if used) is removed, the image is stopped out if necessary, then the plate is etched. As the resist is clear the artist can monitor the etching process accurately.

Lascaux Aquatint spray resist

This coloured resist is sprayed onto the plate to create a range of controllable tonal effects. It may be used in conjunction with Lascaux Lift solution, other lift methods, stencils and Lascaux Wash resist.

Lascaux Coloured coatings for Hard resist

These black or white coatings may be painted onto a dry layer of Hard resist so that the drawing made with etching tools is highly visible. The coloured coatings are not acid-resistant and are designed to be washed away with water before the plate is stopped-out or etched.

Lascaux Remover

Dried resists are removed by immersing the plate in a tray or tank of Lascaux Remover for 15 to 30 minutes.

Detailed technical sheets are available for each of these products.

Lascaux resists and collagraph methods

Collagraphy is an additive method: media and materials are added to the plate surface to create a range of textures which will hold intaglio ink in different ways. The plates are not etched so no acids are required, and the use of acrylic media to build up the plate avoids the use of toxic solvents. The printed effects may be indistinguishable from etchings or may be unique to certain types of collagraph media (e.g. carborundum). Collagraph techniques and materials may be used on a variety of substrates such as thick card, rigid plastic sheets or previously worked metal plates (e.g. mezzotinted, aquatinted, open-bitten or line etched).

The plates should be bevelled with a file, cleaned, grained (or have a rough or absorbent surface) and be thoroughly degreased (see technical sheet for Lascaux Hard resist) before building the image. As with etching plates which are not necessarily deeply bitten, a surface with a low relief can yield a comprehensive range of tones. Indented lines in the media hold the ink and print depending on their depth. Pitted areas create tonal effects while smooth surfaces wipe clean and print as pale tones and whites. When smooth media are used to create raised marks, the edges of the marks hold the ink and print as a contour line. Collage material such as fabrics, netting, feathers, paper, plastic film, tinfoil and tissue can be embedded or impressed into Lascaux acrylic modelling pastes or gesso to generate a range of effects. Photographic and digital elements and a wide range of drawn and painted marks can be introduced to collagraphy by laminating a photopolymer film to the plate and exposing this to a dot screen and the positive (which holds the image). The correctly exposed, developed and dried film has smooth and pitted areas which can be inked up and printed or worked further using Lascaux acrylic media.

Lascaux Hard resist and Stop-out resist

These media dry to form smooth non-printing surfaces and different image building methods can be explored. When a layer is painted on a textured plate, the depth of the pitted area is altered, less ink is held and the printed tone is reduced. Diluted resists will generate a range of soft tones. Layers can be built up until the area prints as a white and in this way vivid whites can be created on steel etching plates. Dramatic linear and painted images can be formed using this technique on mezzotinted, aquatinted or gessoed plates.

Another technique involves applying an even smooth layer over an entire unworked metal plate. After a few minutes impressions may be made in the layer using feathers, netting, string, fabrics, leaves, etc. When the Hard resist has been dried it may be drawn into with etching tools. Further layers of resist or other media can be added to alter the image. After printing the resists may be removed from metal plates with Lascaux Remover and the plate recycled.

Stop-out resist may be painted thickly on a smooth substrate to generate a contour lines. The resists can be used to seal collagraph plates when necessary (e.g. absorbent substrates or carborundum plates).

Lascaux Gesso

The gesso has a pitted surface which holds the ink and prints as a dark tone. Painted gestural marks, linear images, or offset marks can be made on a smooth plate (e.g. coated with an even layer of Lascaux Hard resist).

The gesso can also be painted smoothly and evenly over all of the plate surface to create a tonal base. While it is wet it can be drawn into with brush ends, sticks or paint shapers to create broad lines. Textured materials can be pressed into the gesso which will hold the impression. The dry worked plate will tend to print darkly but if a layer of Lascaux resist is painted over the dry gesso, some of the smaller pits will be closed and the resulting printed image will have more lights and contrast.

Pumice powder, carborundum and sand

Marks can be painted with Lascaux resists or gesso on a plate and pumice, carborundum or sand particles immediately sprinkled over the wet media. The excess is shaken from the plate and the lines are left encrusted. This is repeated until the image is complete (the image may also be screenprinted onto the plate using a coarse mesh and a slow drying waterproof printing mix). When the plate is dry it is brushed to free any loose particles. The printed effect varies according to which material is used: pumice is the finest powder, carborundum is available in a range of grades, and sand has the coarsest particle size.

The particles can be made into paintable mixtures by adding water and a little Lascaux Hard resist. These can be used for tonal and wash effects.

Disclaimer:

The information provided above is given to the best of our knowledge and is based on our current research and experience. It does not absolve the artist from the responsibility of first testing the suitability of our products for the substrate and specific use conditions he or she has in mind. This technical sheet will become invalid with any revised edition. The latest update is always found on our website.