

# Screen printing

Using a layered technique based on a flat yellow background



**Emma Reynolds**

**Under The Same Sky**

A 'Fine Art Screen Painter' Emma uses the mesh like an artists canvas to print and has created a series of skies.

Combining fine art and screen printing to create pieces that only exist only as a screen print Emma demonstrates

Adhocism in her approach to her work.

She is also challenging the traditional use of the tool as she paints as an artist does on the mesh as opposed to using predefined stencils. Emma also uses a lot of texture in her work where as a lot of screen printing is about precision, strong edges, smooth, flawless colour, that look more like machine reproductions, as opposed to fine art.

# Screen printing

Using a layered technique based on a flat yellow background



Solid yellow background, didn't press hard enough on bottom edge. Gradient dark blue to mid blue sort of worked



Solid yellow background, didn't press hard enough on bottom edge, but better! Painted the darkest cliff on mesh with paintbrush and light reflection on sea, with a gradient over the top. Was pleased with this.



Solid yellow background that is strong. Second press of the cliff and its much more subtle which I liked. Dark to light gradient sky. I was pleased with this as I got a soft edge by accident, which I was told was because I had bad technique! Hadn't pressed hard enough when I pulled the ink



Solid yellow background. I Painted yellow lines on with paintbrush under coral gradient. I like the texture I achieved in this version. Second try at gradient sky from dark to mid to transparent blues. Better tonally. Overprinted the bottom section with new learnt techniques. I am rubbish with a paintbrush so I used the edge of a piece of card for the reflection line and a sponge to create the texture on the top of the back cliff. I love all the texture I got in this, although not entirely sure how I did it. Happy accident.



Additional pinky grey cloud through the middle and coral gradient for top part of red sky. I got swirly marks appear on this one which I think is when I flood the screen badly (it doesn't run smoothly over) and it creates these swirls.



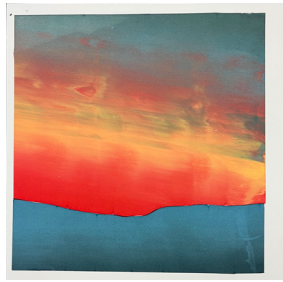
This is probably my most complete one in this format, it looks nothing like what I was trying to achieve but I learnt a lot.

# Screen printing

Using a layered technique based on a gradient background



This is the first pull of the gradients to create background of the sky



This is the third or fourth pull where they blend much better, but my colours and placement are a bit wrong



I tried to paint in some of the stronger yellow as it was missing that punchy part, but it looks clunky! I also tried to paint in the darker line across the sky behind the gradient but that also looks clunky. I also have funny marks on the right



Better sky gradients that are smoother and blend better. Some sponge clouds and managed to get some yellow highlights in the bottom of the red sky. Some nice texture in the cliffs and highlight on the water



I liked this one the most because I had achieved some texture and the bottom part particularly I was more confident and experimental with and it came out with some nice results. Still nothing like the original!

# Screen printing

## Things I learnt, if it can go wrong it will go wrong

You need time, patience and careful planning. I liked Emma's work as it was a 'free printing' process where you didn't need to use photo emulsion and expose a screen, you just got on with it and experimented. This still takes time. Each time you change colour you have to wash and dry your screen, then set up the registration, test print, then print, which comes out nothing like the test print. It was really hard to be consistent in this technique and every time I thought I had worked it out, I hadn't.



### PAPER ORIENTATION and DIRECTION OF PULL

I had to turn my paper 90° to the right to get a horizontal gradient as you always pull top to bottom of a screen. I had to push the ink in a diagonal direction to replicate the angles in the piece. I thought both these things interesting.

It was then challenging to paint cliffs and parts at a 90° angle.

I also printed one the wrong way round as I put the cliffs on the right and couldn't understand why nothing aligned.

I also got the stencil folded over so a completely different shape appeared.



### COLOUR and DENSITY

Is really hard to replicate. Emma has such lovely soft tones, I felt all my colours were too weak so made them stronger but it's actually the dark around it that makes the softer colours pop, rather than the colours being strong.

You can add different amounts of gloop to create more transparent colours, this is also very temperamental and takes a lot of practice to get anything vaguely close.



### TIME

It takes time to get set up. It took 3 hours to prepare my space, stencils, frame, colours, paper, alignment. It takes time to wash it all off and dry it, clean your area and set up alignment for the next layer. I did like the residue in washing my screen though more than my print.

In trying to create someone else's work there is a lot of trial and error in trying to create the colours, tone, density, layers, depth etc.



### SQUEEGEE TECHNIQUE

It's quite hard to get a smooth pull of the ink, I have no idea what happened here but at the beginning I think I was pushing too hard against the mesh when pushing the ink which meant it 'caught' on the screen and lost smooth contact with the surface which created these weird effects.



### EXPERIMENTAL

I liked it when happy accidents happened and I created lots of texture. This is 'bad' screenprinting technique. I showed the tutor when I had made some texture but she said that was because I hadn't pressed hard enough. I also saturated the paper as I painted on the mesh thickly trying to make it dark but it actually just made a mess on the print, but I liked the texture!



### CONSISTENCY

You can't rush, I rushed this last layer as I ran out of ink, so made some quickly, but made it too dense and ruined this one. I also made my stencils the wrong way round on the last day so I had ink everywhere and it made it really difficult but I didn't have time to remake them, but I should have. It was frustrating when it went wrong, and delightful when I got close. I planned it meticulously, it didn't work, so I rushed things which made some things worse and some things better. I found it near impossible to be consistent although the last thing I did was the bottom cliffs, which I tried the first time on the first day, and I improved them greatly.

# Reflection<sup>1</sup>: paper size and boundaries

Critical reflections on practice and ideas for further interrogation

\_\_\_\_\_

## Paper Size and Boundary

Through creating Reynolds' piece, I was advised to create paper stencils to break the image into parts to start with. In drawing these stencils it drew my attention to the boundary of the paper, the inset boundary of the print and how screenprinting takes place within a frame.

I questioned why screenprints always had boundaries. The image boundary, the piece of paper, and the screen. A frame, within a frame, within a frame; containing (restraining?) the output.

Could I subvert screenprinting by pushing past the boundaries it set?

## Development

This prompted me to ask further, wider questions, about what you can produce through screenprinting. Coupled with my interest in hybrid editorial design across print and digital, allowed me to think of printing presses and how magazines come from one sheet of paper to be bound as individual pages and machines.

Could a route of exploration be to see how many different sized pieces I could create that folded or became something that wasn't one flat, contained image on a chosen material. A magazine, a leaflet, a concertina, a zigzag.

Problems: This would mean creating multiple pieces to print, bind and cut with each piece probably taking a week?!

So I thought, what is longer than a screen? A piece of music. Could I create a piece of music on one continuous piece of paper?

Problem: Longer, larger prints have been done before.

## Influences and Critical Reflections

This drew me to the reading of Adhocism and Jencks and Silvers argument of nature and machines having the same xxx process.

Lichtenstein work was cited as "incorporat(ing) the look of mechanical reproduction into the fine-art world of painting." (MOMA, 2024)

This made me reflect on screenprinting as a tool, in humans trying to create machine like quality and quantity, and that how we are now trying to make machines create human like qualities. Textures in Photoshop to make things looked 'distressed'. An AI project by a friend last term found AI describing images in an emotional way, whereas when she had described them objectively she didn't use any of these words.

We try to impersonate each other. Why?



# Reflection<sup>2</sup>: direction and orientation

Critical reflections on practice and ideas for further interrogation

## Direction and Orientation

I had to explore direction when pushing the ink; and orientation of paper. In trying to recreate the gradient background of the image I had to turn the paper 90° clockwise so the gradient would blend horizontally across the sky rather than vertically, and push the ink diagonally across the screen instead of straight. Both of which challenge how the tool was intended to work.

## Development

Which prompts me to ask what would happen if you moved the paper as you printed, or turned the squeegee in a circle? What if you stopped and started again? What if you put the ink on the front instead of the back and took a print by placing paper on top and pressed down with your arm to print? This would challenge the purpose of the squeegee and how it is used.

Through this interrogation it will challenge the purpose of screen printing which seems in the main to reproduce multiple, flawless, machine style images made up of layers of colour.

It will also challenge the standard use of stencils as I propose to continue as Reynolds did and to free paint.

## Influences and Critical Reflections

Adhocism - Combining subsystems to create a new system:

In the spirit of adhocism I would combine the subsystem of screenprinting with the subsystem of free painting, but instead of using brushes I'll use the tool of screenprinting the squeegee, but as an artists brush to explore mark making through interrogation of the squeegee.

Design Manifesto - Process not the outcome  
Man v machine

# Reflection<sup>3</sup>: space and emotion

Critical reflections on practice and ideas for further interrogation

## Space and Emotion

Through trying to recreate the textures in Reynolds work, close interrogation of the image and my practice, led me to notice how much space and emotion were in the piece. This raised questions of how and why. The sky was the majority of the image which is literal space, but you also felt the space (Rhetoric XY.C). It came from texture, layers and flow of the ink used (and was really hard to recreate). I accidentally created rough edges and denser ink that formed a texture on the print both of which are not what screenprinting is 'designed' to create.

Could I create iterations that visualise sound from a song or music?

## Development

Could I create iterations of sounds from music that visually show the "silence between and around the words-sounds"?

I wondered if music in this way is somehow a universal language that can maintain its nuance and feeling that is lost in translation of language? Tapping into bell hooks notion of creating 'spaces' are for "diverse voices can speak in words other than English or in broken vernacular".

Which reminded me of McLuhans idea of sound having no boundaries, relating back to the boundaries of the paper and how to go beyond.

Furthered by a visit to *Longplayer* (a piece of music created by algorithms that is planned to play for 1000 years without repeating, its been playing for 25 years, started 31st December 1999). I loved this. Is it an iteration as a whole, but also millions of iterations as every second was a new iteration of what had come before. Could I create iterations of the sounds that only occur in that pattern once, tapping into the opposite of what Screenprinting is?

Problem: This is the output rather than the subverting the tool?

## Influences and Critical Reflections

XY Workshop Languages<sup>2</sup>

Spivak's (2020) poetic notion of rhetoric in language and the "silence between and around the words" I loved this and it reminded me of Reynolds work. The felt feeling in the 'space' of the sky.

bell hooks "we must change conventional ways of thinking about language, creating spaces where diverse voices can speak in words other than English or in broken, vernacular speech." Could music transcend this?

Jencks and Silver discuss Kepler's argument that the sun was the centre of the universe. Kepler found this conclusion from the "analogy with God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost" (which were respectively the Sun, the Stars and the Space Between)."

The 'Space Between' also felt emotive and full of feeling, like Reynolds sky.

Longplayer - The Lighthouse on Trinity Buoy Wharf. Continuous music for 1000 years of Tibetan Singing Bowls. With the premise of passing something down through generations, taking care of something for others.

# Questions

## After 1 day

Design an iterative experiment that 'hacks' it to do something it is not intended to do. Subvert its primary function:

What it does – creates a hand made print usually in multiples

How it does it – push ink through a mesh use a squidgee – direction, ink on top side, place paper and use squidgee to take the print from the paper side? The leftover on the screen and the silk screen becomes the output?

What it does it for – poster, print, image – subvert make a book, magazine, concertina booklet, letter, folded pieces, roll, scroll, how long, how short, how big, how small, content? something that isn't one flat piece.

## After last day

Questions at the end of the practice

What's unexpected about this thing you just made?

How hard it is

How inconsistent the results are

How each one is different

How fulfilling and frustrating it is all at once

What do you understand better or differently about your tool or medium now?

Orientation of paper to get a desired effect

Directional pull of the ink to get a desired effect

How precise and accurate you need to be

How much time, practice and patience you need

How long it takes to get set up and inbetween layers of printing

How did it pose a particular technical challenge?

Mixing the right colours

Creating layers that replicate the original

Creating the textures and tones and transparencies of the original

Creating depth and felt feeling

Setting up alignment and registration

What kind of output or knowledge does this tool or medium favour?

Output:

Strong, stenciled, multiples

Layered imagery

Clean machine like precision

System

What relationship does it have to graphic design?

It creates strong graphic images that communicate thoughts, ideas, values, views, information



# Written response: Proposal

“Screenprinting is a process where ink is forced through a mesh screen onto a surface. Making certain areas of the screen impervious to printing ink creates a stencil, which blocks the printing ink from passing through the screen. The ink that passes through forms the printed image.” (The Met Museum, 2022)

Artist Emma Reynolds challenges this process and tool of screen-printing by painting directly onto the mesh and producing just one print, combining fine art and screenprinting. In this way she is creating pieces in the form of ‘Adhocism’ as coined by Jencks and Silver, who claim “all creations are initially ad hoc combinations of past subsystems” (Jencks and Silver, 1972).

Through trying to create an iteration<sup>1</sup> of Reynolds work, the process raised questions about paper size and boundaries; direction and orientation; space and emotion.

In trying to replicate the sky, the process of creating a gradient, that moved horizontally and diagonally across the image, raised questions about direction of flooding the screen and orientation of paper. Through the process I found that screenprinting seems to be about creating machine like reproductions that are perfectly aligned, flawless and very controlled.

Which prompts me to ask what would happen if you moved the paper as you printed, or turned the

squeegee in a circle? What if you stopped and started again? What if you put the ink on the front instead of the back of the mesh and took a print by placing paper on top and pressed down with your arm to print?

Based on these findings and critical reflections (questions?) of the tool, I propose to create 10-100 iterations that interrogate how the squeegee is used. Through a systematic enquiry I will iterate the tool extensively through direction and mark making to see if the squeegee can be subverted into a paintbrush / mark maker.

In the spirit of adhocism I will use only left over paint from the studio and off cuts of paper (cut to equal sizes) and only two layers. A flat base colour for the experimental work to sit on top. Each print will only be pulled once. I will re-use the same screen without washing it to see how previous iterations effect future iterations and so they are iterations of each other.

## References

The Met Museum (2022). Screenprint. [online] Available at: Metmuseum.org. Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/collection-areas/drawings-and-prints/materials-and-techniques/printmaking/screenprint> (Accessed: 16th January 2024)

Jencks, C. and Silver, N. (1972) Adhocism; the Case for Improvisation. First Edition. London: Secker and Warburg