

NUMBERS & NICHES

760

ISSUE 6 • FEB 2017

PRINTING AND ENGRAVING



Screen Printing

INTRODUCTION:

SCREEN PRINTING — IT'S EVERYWHERE!

Take a minute to examine the graphic on the t-shirt that you're currently wearing or the corporate slogan emblazoned on the tote bag on the nearest person standing around you. Chances are, you're within a stone's throw to an object or item that has been screen printed on.

Screen printing's earliest known appearance has been traced back to the Song Dynasty in China, circa 960-1279 CE, before being adopted and refined by Japan and other Asian countries. It was introduced to Europe in the late 1700s, and only in 1907 did an Englishman by the name of Samuel Simon officially patent the screen printing technique.



Simon's method was largely used to print high quality custom wallpaper, as well as on silk or linen material-products that were exclusive only to the affluent at the time. Techniques for screen printing continued to be refined as time progressed and so too did its application. These days, common products from the screen printing industry include posters, labels, decals, signage, and all types of textiles and electronic circuit boards.

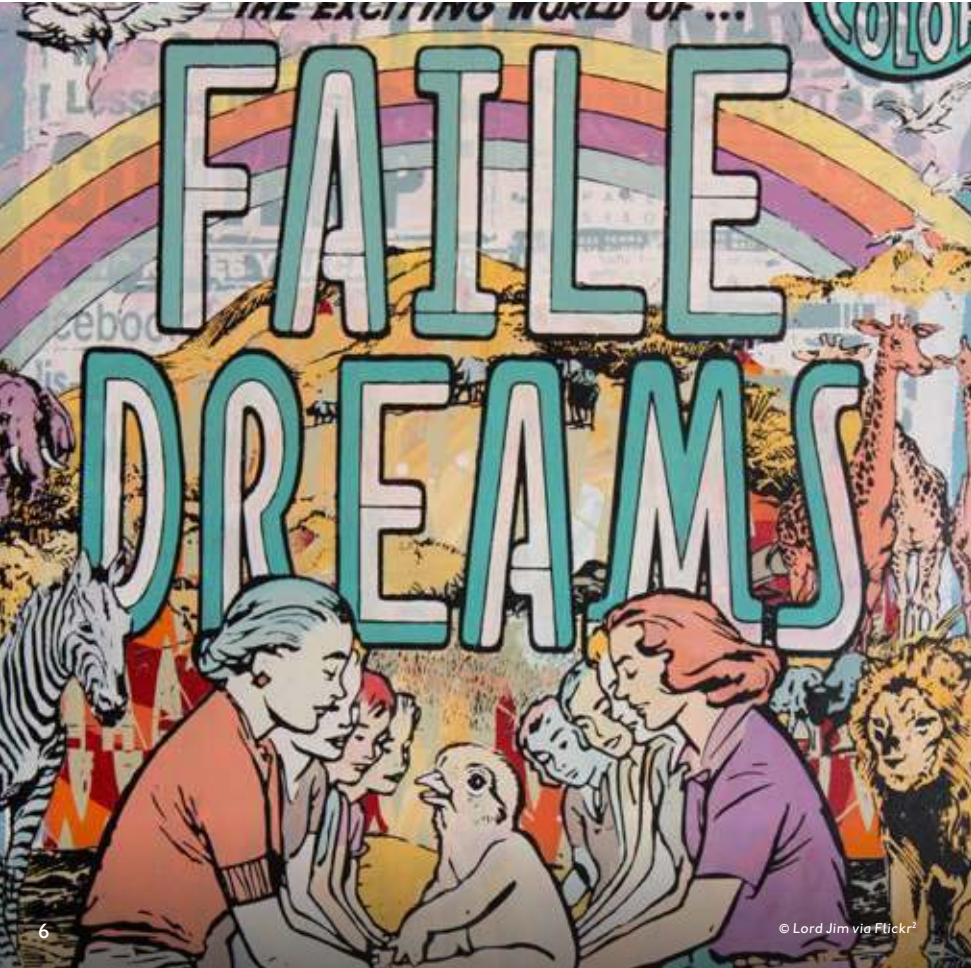
Screen printing consists of three elements: the screen (which is the image carrier), the squeegee, and ink. The screen printing process uses a porous mesh stretched tightly over a frame made of wood or metal, with proper tension being critical in producing accurate colour registration. A stencil is produced on the screen either manually or photo chemically, and defines the image that will be printed.

Screen printing is arguably the most versatile of all printing processes. It can be used to print on a wide variety of materials: paper, plastics, glass, metals, and fabrics. The advantage of screen printing over other print processes is that the press can print on surfaces of any shape, thickness, and size. Screen printing also allows for a greater thickness of ink to be applied onto surfaces than is possible with other printing techniques, producing unique interesting effects. The simplicity of the application process means a wider range of inks and dyes can be used, as compared to traditional print making techniques like lithography and woodcut.



ANDY WARHOL

Andy Warhol is largely credited for bringing screen printing into the public eye with his famous screen printed artworks depicting everyone from Marilyn Monroe to the can of Campbell Soup. The technique of screen printing not only allowed Warhol to experiment with a range of colours on the same image, but as each screen pull was unique, images replicated with the same colour had differing results.



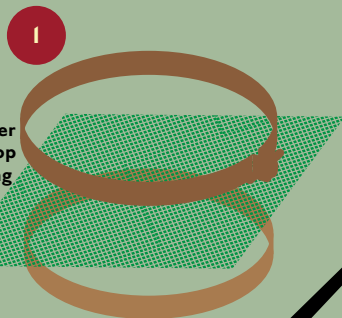
FAILE

Faile is a Brooklyn-based collaboration between two artists, Patrick McNeil and Patrick Miller. Founded in 1999 along with an emergence of street art culture and DIY products, Faile has centred their practice on painting and printmaking. They are recognised for their wide range of creative approaches, including their pioneering use of wheat pasting and stencilling in street art, as well as their iconic appropriation and collage.

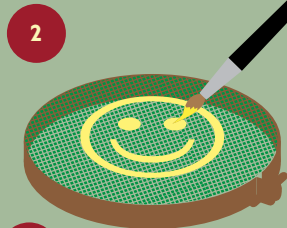
DO-IT-YOURSELF

SCREEN PRINTING

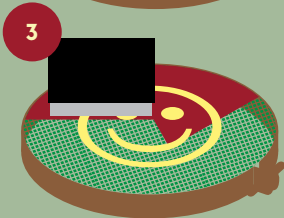
MATERIAL LIST:
NYLON MESH FABRIC
EMBROIDERY HOOP
DRAWING FLUID
SCREEN FILLER
SCREENPRINTING INK
PAINTBRUSH
SQUEEGEE



1
Stretch the fabric taut over the inner embroidery hoop and secure it by tightening the outer hoop over it.



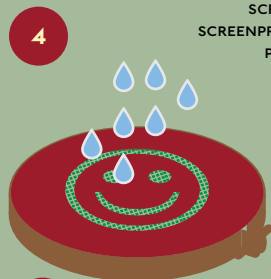
2
Paint your design with drawing fluid onto the fabric and allow it to dry completely.



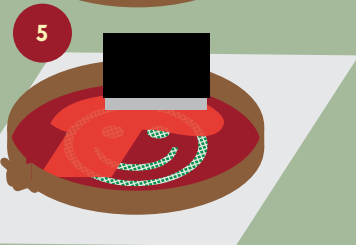
3
Apply screen filler and spread it evenly over the surface of the fabric and leave for 8 hours to dry.

4
Rinse off the drawing fluid and allow the fabric to dry.

You have now made your screen!



5
Flip it over and position your screen over a piece of paper or a t-shirt. Hold it steady and squeegee screenprinting ink through the mesh.



6
Remove the screen carefully and you're done! Be sure to wash it so that the ink does not clog your screen the next time you use it.



In this issue, we chat with Mr. Asman Bin Khalil and Ms. Kiara Ishmael, founders and artists of Emprinstic Workshop, a local independent studio that provides embroidery, print and sticker services (hence the name Em-prin-stic).

**How did you get started with screen printing?
Did you come from an art background?**

Asman: I came from a technical background, previously working as an electrician at Woodlands checkpoint, while Kiara came from an I.T. background. I started screen printing through initially wanting to create my own t-shirt line as an entrepreneurial project. This set me on the path of learning about screen printing and I began messing around with computer software like Photoshop and Illustrator.



Kiara: 100% self-taught and with very scarce resources. The internet back when we were starting out wasn't like what it is today, YouTube content was scarce and you wouldn't be able to find any screen printing videos online then offering such depth and quality of instructions.

A: Kids now can just log on and find high quality, detailed videos. Everything about the process- from wood making, frame making, stretching of the mesh, experimenting with thick to thin pieces of wood in frame making- you'll be able to find some instructional guide online. For me back then- from stencil making to choices of ink- I learnt how to do via trial and error. Naturally I had to endure a lot of errors before getting things right, and that took years to get better at.

What items did you start screen printing on and how did this progress into a business?

A: Back in 2007 when I started, there weren't many people doing screen printing in Singapore. I started making my own t-shirts and the first shirts I did were for my own band, Cesspit. Slowly things started to spread by word of mouth during gigs that I screened our tees. There would be kids at shows pointing out "Eh baik baju! (nice shirt), where did you do it?", and from there, referrals to me would start.

I began taking in small orders; some of the first bands that approached me were veteran bands like Force Vomit, Stomping Ground, Plain Sunset, LC93.

K: Our business has always been heavily reliant on word-of-mouth. We don't seek to promote our services aggressively on social media or through buying advertisements. It's not that we want to deliberately keep an underground image, but in truth we are just a two-person, small scale outfit. If we have too much work, too many orders, the quality of work produced will be compromised.

Beyond t-shirts, what other products, materials and mediums have you worked on? Were there any projects that were personally memorable?

A: I've screened vinyl stickers, glass surfaces, walls, canvas tote bags and CD and LP sleeves on paper. This year, together with Suhaimi of skate group Nocturnal Society, we screened something new for the first time- a skateboard. We had to create a special custom curved screen for that which was challenging but fun.

K: We've done a lot of posters but the one that stands out for me is a really cool glow-in-the-dark one for Posterama, an international poster/typography art company. It was the first time they tried silk screening their posters, they were all previously digitally printed.

How did your workspace progress to your current studio in Kallang?

A: I spent about three to four years learning and practicing as an independent freelancer before committing to a studio name and doing this full time. Initially, I started with just a table in a bedroom that I rented. As time went on, I needed more space so I rented a table space at (record store) Straits Records. They ended up moving so I chanced upon a space at Haji Lane that was 300 square feet so I decided to take it up.

K: Six months after the start of renting at Haji Lane, the owner of the space showed up out of the blue at our studio with his bodyguard and demanded his rent money. We were totally stunned. Turns out, the person we had been paying rent to for over six months didn't hand over the rent money to the owner. The owner and his bodyguard padlocked our space and forced us out, with the intent of confiscating all our supplies, machines and materials. We pleaded and explained that we didn't know what was going on. The next day, the owner gave us two hours to take our stuff and get out.

A: Eventually a friend soon offered us a room in this current space in Kallang, which was a former jamming studio. Our projects started piling up which meant more



business, leading to us expanding from one room to pretty much taking up the entire studio.

How do you feel about seeing your screened work being worn, used and adorned by strangers in public?

A: It's definitely a good feeling. Sometimes we get recognition when clients credit us in their small way through social media, but sometimes they don't. Either way it is fine with us.

K: Every product printed is a labour of love. I cannot emphasise that enough. It's like giving birth!

What are your thoughts on other competing print services like DTG (Direct-to-Garment) printing?

A: It's a personal thing. DTG is simply cold, machine printed- there's no human touch, no story to it.

K: You definitely get many colours, it's precise, you can print as many or little as you want- which is good if you want to print in smaller quantities.

A: Honestly, if I could afford it, I would buy a DTG machine as well. As a person providing print services, I have to keep up with the times. It would be good for Emprinstic ultimately, not having to say no to any order request. That said, there's still a lot of development

in DTG machine technology especially with regard to inks and print heads- so I'm good to hold off until things stabilise.

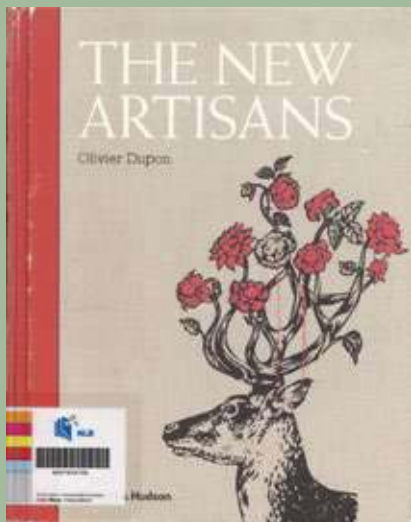
Any last thoughts to share?

A: There have been people who started their own screen printing studio at the same time as us and ended up throwing in the towel along the way. Screen printing is not easy. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it. It's also not the easiest thing handling customers!

K: It's amazing that Asman doesn't give up. Screen printing is a tedious job. But we persevere, learn and grow along the way.

"SCREEN PRINTING: THE RUNNING OF AN INDEPENDENT STUDIO" WITH EMPRINSTIC WORKSHOP Mr. Asman Bin Khalil and Ms. Kiara Ishmael, founders and artists of Emprinstic Workshop, will be at Central Public Library on 23 February 2017 (7.30pm) to share insights on their self-taught journey in screen printing, the challenges in starting their own business and project highlights through the years. Find out more at www.nlb.gov.sg/golibrary.

The New Artisans: Handmade Designs for Contemporary Living



All rights reserved.

By Olivier Dupon
Thames & Hudson, London,
UK, 2011
—
English 745.0922 DUP-[ART]

The current resurgence of handmade craft is well encapsulated in this book, with an impressive representation of profiles gathered across the globe and over a wide range of artisanship. Aside from detailed features on the global handcrafting movement and recommendations on websites and shops to visit, the directory of products help categorise the featured pieces for ease of reference.

1

Pulled: A Catalogue of Screen Printing



All rights reserved.

Mike Perry
Princeton Architectural Press, New York,
USA, 2011

—
English 769.973 PER –[ART]

Bringing together the works of more than 40 screen printers, the book is a collection of prints and an idea bank for any creative thinkers. Learn how to screen print through one of the most creative guides we have seen and learn more about some of today's most talented designers.

2

Print Making Book: Projects and Techniques in the Art of Hand-Printing



Vanessa Mooncie
Guild of Master
Craftsman Publications,
Lewes, East Sussex,
UK, 2013

—
English 761 MOO -[ART]

All rights reserved.

3

Screen Printing at Home: Print Your Own Fabric to Make Simple Sewn Projects



Karen Lewis
David & Charles, Ohio,
USA, 2014

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English 746.62 LEW -[ART]

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This publication is printed
on Cyclus Print. Its text
is set in Mercury and
Johnston ITC Std.

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