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Intaglio Photopolymer:

Exposing a Random Dot Screen Before or After the Film Positive?

Dr Dianne Longley - October 28, 2020.

In this test I was investigating the difference in the printed intaglio image when the random dot screen is exposed either before the film positive or after the film positive. I originally did this research for a Southern Graphics Council conference presentation in the USA in 2004. I intend on repeating this experiment with current photopolymer plate and the same film positive. I will update this blog post with the new information. It is difficult to ascertain the differences in images on the internet, but I have endeavoured to describe what I saw when I magnified each image.

A film positive was made at a film-printing lab, 120 lpi halftone film positive, right reading emulsion up. This was exposed onto Miraclon DS94 plates using a vacuum fluorescent UV unit. Washout with cellulose sponge in tap water at 22 °C. Drying for 10 minutes in front of a warm fan heater. Post exposure for 10 minutes in UV unit.



Test Intaglio RDS before
40 seconds, random dot screen first/before
240 seconds, film positive after
Result: Image is slightly softer in look than
exposing the RDS second.



Test Intaglio RDS after
240 seconds, film positive first/before
40 seconds, random dot screen after
Result: Image has very slight increase in
sharpness compared to exposing the RDS first.

Conclusion

There is very little difference in exposing a RDS before your image/film positive or after the image/film positive. If however, you have made a drawing on film with media that remains sticky or could offset to the plate and then onto the RDS, you would expose your RDS first to protect it.

If you would like further information on this test process and the results I gained you can email me on dianne@diannelongley.com.au

Dianne Longley

Published 'Printmaking with Photopolymer Plates' in 1998, and is now researching and writing a new book on photopolymer printmaking for artists. Dianne operates Agave Print Studio in rural Victoria, Australia. An emphasis on safer printmaking techniques: workshops, tuition, collaborations, editioning, residencies and accommodation.