

Brief History of Screen Printing

Using materials other than silk for screen printing has a long history that begins with the ancient art of stenciling used by the Egyptians and Greeks as early as 2500 B.C.

The stencil and pounce, seemingly developed in or about the seventh century, were means of reproduction of which Buddhist monks were especially fond. A design was first drawn with a brush, and then outlined with needle pricks. The pattern was then laid on a new surface, and a small bag filled with colored chalk (the pounce) tapped lightly against the holes, thus transferring the design, which could then be traced and painted accurately. Stencils were used to color blockprinted images, and in Europe were also used to apply glue, the tacky surface then "flocked" with colored lint. The pochoir (French "stencil") process was used for late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century limited-book editions, in which monochrome prints were hand colored using a series of stencils.

Late eighteenth-century Japanese stencils for fabric printing have the delicate isolated parts tied into the general pattern with silk thread, but there was no fabric backing to hold the whole together. The stencil image was printed using a large soft brush, which did not damage the delicate paper pattern.

Stencil printing became commercially viable in the West only after considerable changes were made to the equipment. The rubber blade of a squeegee was one such advancement. The idea of using silk fabric as a screen or ground to hold a tieless stencil together is generally credited to Samuel Simon of Manchester, who was granted a silk-screen process patent in England in 1907. In 1914, only a few years after Simon's patent, John Pilsworth of San Francisco developed a multicolor process of silk screening called screen printing.

Screen Printing is also called Silk Screening and Serigraphy. Anthony Velonis, a Works Progress Administration artist, coined the term serigraph (silk writing) to distinguish the otherwise identical fine art application from the commercial. The term "Serigraphy", comes from the Latin word "Seri" (silk) and the Greek word "graphein" which means "to write or draw".

Nowadays, screen printing can be in a small scale as well as in a large scale. For small runs and for printing images in Full Color (4 Color Process), Inkjet and UV Directly Printing Press are very good alternatives.

