Printing on Uncoated Papers Using inkAID Coatings

By Karin Schminke

Sometimes an artist finds a beautiful paper in her studio or at an art store that would be a perfect substrate to print on using an inkjet printer. Often, printing on these "found" papers results in an image with dull color and poor detail. Commercially prepared inkjet papers have a special coating to hold the ink out on the surface (or very close to the surface) of the paper to keep it from soaking in. To achieve better detail and density on uncoated papers, a precoat made by inkAID (also described earlier in this chapter for use with non-porous materials) can be manually applied.

TIP 260 Look for interesting surface textures.

Some of my favorite papers to coat are handmade papers because they have beautiful irregularities in the surface. You can find handmade papers in art and craft stores such as Michael's (L15.38) or Pearl Art & Craft Supply (L15.39).

TIP 261 Use papers that work well with the inkAID precoat.

Papers often warp when the surface is wetted by the precoat, so thicker papers (about 300gsm and heavier) are better candidates for precoating with inkAID. Test a section first before coating a whole sheet.

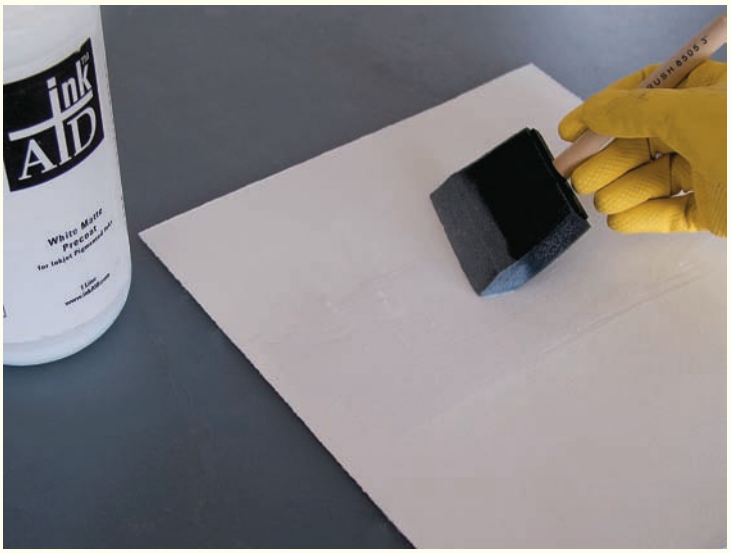
TIP 262 Apply inkAID carefully and consider "pizza wheels."

To assure complete coverage when coating papers with inkAID, brush on two coats with a sponge brush, overlapping each stroke slightly. Apply your first coat vertically, let the paper dry approximately 12 hours, and then apply the next one horizontally.

On the topic of "pizza wheels," the same basic information applies with paper as it does with non-porous surfaces (described in Tip 235). Using inkAID White Matte Precoat on printers with wheels will usually eliminate the creation of any visible tracks, and Clear inkAID on paper will often work well if you don't apply it too thickly. Test a paper/precoat combination by precoating a small strip across the area of a

Artist: Karin Schminke; **Image title:** *Useless Bay at Daybreak*; **Print Size:** 10 × 12 inches; **Paper:** Artist's handmade paper; **Printer Name:** HP Photosmart Pro B9180; **Ink Used:** HP Vivera; **Driver:** Standard HP Driver; **Info:** Image created from drawings and prints which were scanned and compiled in Photoshop.

sheet of paper where the wheels will make contact, and then print on it to determine if you see wheel marks or smearing.



Applying the first coat of the inkAID White Matte Precoat onto a sheet of heavy art paper.
Photo © Karin Schminke

TIP 263 Apply inkAID in a more random way for different results.

For prints on papers that have color or pronounced texture, you may want a bit of the paper to show through. You can spread the inkAID in two uneven coats for a more nuanced surface (see photo below).

Detail photo of white inkAID after brushing it unevenly on black paper.
Photo © Karin Schminke

Artist: Karin Schminke; **Image title:** *Epiphany*; **Print Size:** 10×15 inches; **Paper:** Artist's handmade paper; **Printer Name:** HP Photosmart Pro B9180; **Ink Used:** HP Vivera; **Driver:** Standard HP Driver; **Info:** Image created from drawings and prints which were scanned and compiled in Photoshop.

TIP 264 Flatten papers after coating to avoid printhead strikes on the print.

As soon as the inkAID precoat has dried enough not to run, hang it by one corner or edge to help eliminate warping. I add a masking tape tab to the back edge of the paper to facilitate hanging prints so they don't get damaged. When dry, press the paper flat under a large board for 8–16 hours. If the paper does not flatten completely, roll the paper up in a loose cylinder for about ten minutes just before printing, keeping the precoated side out.

(Left) Precoated paper hanging to dry from binder clips. (Right) Precoated paper rolled in a loose cylinder to smooth out remaining wrinkles.
Photos © Karin Schminke

TIP 265 Iron your paper if the curl is severe.

Some smaller papers may be ironed flat with a standard iron. If you do decide to iron your paper, experiment with different heat settings and protect the paper with a thin cloth while ironing.

TIP 266 Trick your printer into seeing the black paper.

Using dark papers, especially black, can be problematic when trying to load them into some printers that look for the paper to reflect light in order to load. You may need to paint the back side of the paper white, or attach a thin sheet of white paper on the back to get it to load.