

## The Carrier Method of Printing on Thin Paper\*

THIS BOOK EXCERPT SHOWS HOW TO PRINT ON THAI UNRYU OR RICE PAPER



Working with transparent papers often results in prints that are equally interesting on the front (left) and back (right).

The 8-1/2 x 10 in. inkjet print shown above was inkjet printed on one side of a custom precoated sheet of Thai Unryu paper by Karin Schminke, a member of the Digital Atelier, and co-author of the new book: *Digital Art Studio: Techniques for Combining Inkjet Printing with Traditional Art Materials*. The following excerpt from the book explains how you, too, can inkjet print on the thin substrate of your choice.

For more details on the book, which was co-authored by Schminke, Bonny Pierce Lhotka and Dorothy Simpson Krause, see p. 49. Note that a second excerpt from the book, "Preparing Linen Canvas" can be found on PDIA's Knowledge College (Article 3902).

### Materials

- Protective gloves
- Newspaper or plastic sheet to protect work surface
- Thin paper such as Thai Unryu or rice paper
- Dura-Lar polyester carrier sheet
- inkAID clear semi-gloss precoat
- Sponge brush

The carrier method is ideal for printing on thin surfaces such as rice paper or Thai Unryu, which either do not feed well through the printer or do not have a surface able to receive a print. Our carrier demonstration uses a polyester sheet to help your desired paper through the printer, then releases the paper easily after printing. If your printer won't recognize a clear material, use matte polyester or simply place white paper under your sheet of clear polyester.

After cutting your thin paper to desired size, cut your polyester carrier sheet to fit through your printer's path. (With a large-format printer or other without pizza wheels, you can print over the paper's edges by making the carrier sheet about an inch larger than your thin paper; for a desktop printer with pizza wheels, or to print with the paper's border, cut your paper and carrier sheet to the same size.) Position the paper on the carrier sheet.

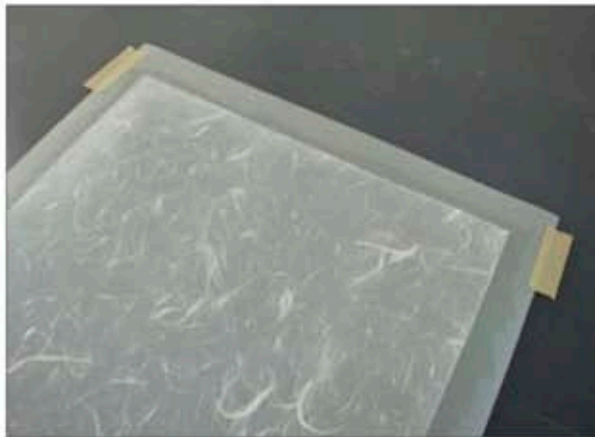
**STEP 1:** While holding your thin paper in position with one hand, apply the precoat with a sponge brush. The paper will adhere into position quickly. Work outward from your original painted area, brushing a medium thickness of the

\*Taken from DIGITAL ART STUDIO: TECHNIQUES FOR COMBINING INKJET PRINTING WITH TRADITIONAL ART MATERIALS by Karin Schminke, Dorothy Simpson Krause, and Bonny Pierce Lhotka. Copyright (c) 2004 LSK LLC. Published by Watson-Guptill Publication. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

precoat until the entire paper is covered. Translucent papers become more transparent as the precoat is brushed on.

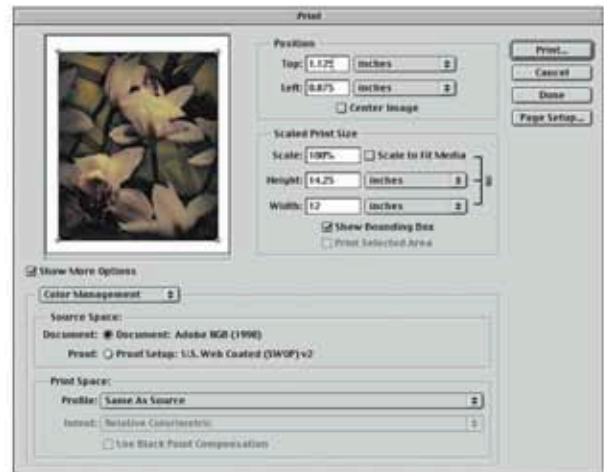


**STEP 2:** Allow the precoat to dry thoroughly. If the carrier sheet itself wants to curl, tape its edges to your table so that the thin paper will dry flat.

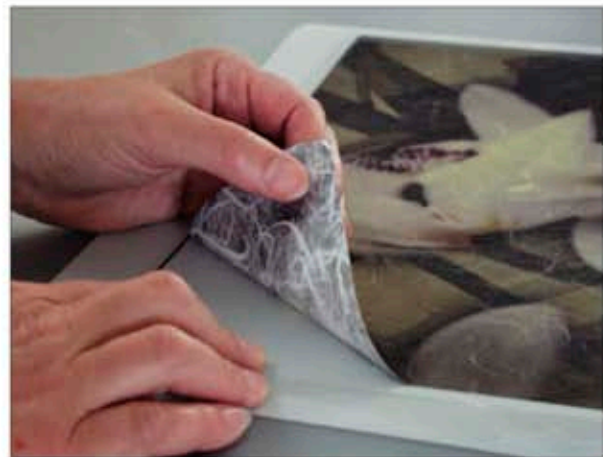


**STEP 3:** In Photoshop's Page Setup window, type in the top and left margins in the print box to position your print. For large-format printers: Measure the carrier sheet, paper, and margins between the two. Use software controls to position your image over the paper; you may overprint the paper's edges to get a full-bleed image. For desktop printers: If the carrier and paper are not the same size, either trim the carrier to the size of the paper, or remove all precoat from the sheet around the paper with a damp cloth. With the second option, be aware that ink printed outside the paper will pool on the carrier and may run. With desktop printers, normally you can't print on polyester treated with

clear precoat without damaging the print and/or printer, but in this case, the paper area is porous and should work if the precoat isn't so thick that it has a glossy finish.



**STEP 4:** Place the carrier sheet with the paper still attached into your printer and print. Remove the printed paper from the carrier sheet by peeling it off from one corner.



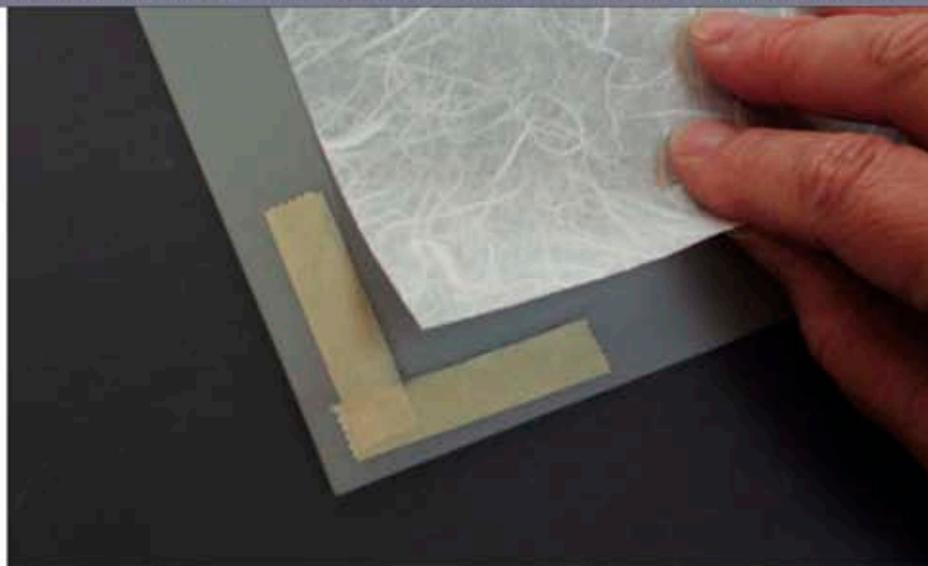
### Creative Explorations

- Once you've made your first print, flip the paper over, invert the image in your digital file (or choose a complementary image), and repeat the above carrier process to print on the back of the paper. This creates an interesting effect on papers of varying densities and on papers with threads, leaves, and similar components.
- Crinkle thin paper after printing and use it as a unique collage material.



CENTER YOUR PAPER ON THE CARRIER SHEET SO ITS EDGES MAY BE OVERPRINTED.

**TIP:** To center your paper on the carrier sheet so that its edges may be overprinted: Cut the carrier sheet, then print directly on it a rectangle the size of the final image you want to print. It should be transparent except for a one-pixel black border to mark its edges. Note print-setup settings so you can use them for the final print. This printed border will be damp and blurry, so mark the corners of the rectangle with tape and then wipe off any excess ink before proceeding.



- Many artists experiment with ironing fabric onto waxed paper. This variation of the carrier method is good for small pieces of fabric that you intend to reuse in a collage. Precoating improves the density of the ink and works well for all fabrics, regardless of the carrier employed. However, precoating does stiffen fabric, so its application is not appropriate where the fabric needs to flow naturally, as in wearables.

**Sources of Materials**

Thai Unryu is a semi-transparent, light- to medium-weight paper with visible fibers. It is widely used in bookbinding, collages, invitations, and printmaking and is sold in various forms. Some online sellers include [www.artpaper.com](http://www.artpaper.com), [www.paperzone.com](http://www.paperzone.com), and [www.katespaperie.com](http://www.katespaperie.com).

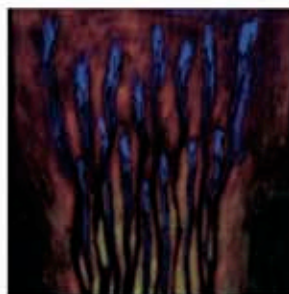
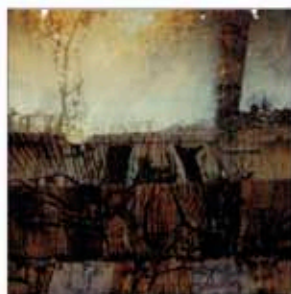
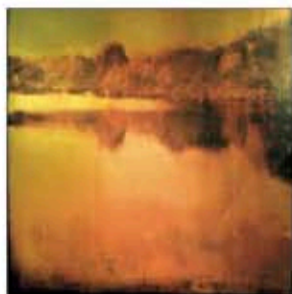
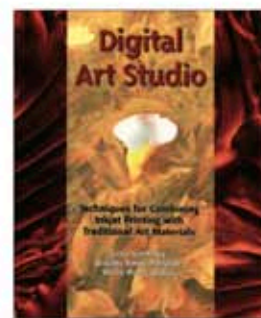
Dura-Lar is a clear, stable polyester-based film made by Graftix Plastics and sold in art-supply stores. For the name of the closest retailer, visit [www.grafixarts.com](http://www.grafixarts.com).

The inkAID precoat can be ordered online through [www.inkaid.com](http://www.inkaid.com). ©

**Digital Art Studio**

By Karin Schminke, Dorothy Simpson Krause, and Bonny Pierce Lhotka

This new manual shows photographers and artists how to integrate inkjet printing with traditional artist's tools and processes. The 160-page book contains 300 illustrations and step-by-step instructions for fabric printing, creating unique surfaces on which to print, underprinting and overprinting, wet transfers, dry-emulsion transfers, gelatin (fresco) transfers, layered printing, and dimensional images. The book can be ordered on Amazon.com for \$20.37.



*Karin Schminke, Dorothy Krause, and Bonny Lhotka are traditionally trained artists who have worked together as Digital Atelier ([www.digitalatelier.com](http://www.digitalatelier.com)) for ten years. They push the boundaries of art-making, research emerging technologies, share ideas with fellow artists, and provide feedback to hardware and software developers from the artist's perspective.*