

the  
**stitchbook**  
COLLECTIVE 2022

## Workshop 11 of 12

### **Image Transfer** with ink-jet printer

These notes should be read in conjunction with the online video



[www.untangledthreads.co.uk/MEMBERS](http://www.untangledthreads.co.uk/MEMBERS)

**Video Password: TRANSFER**

**Image Transfer**

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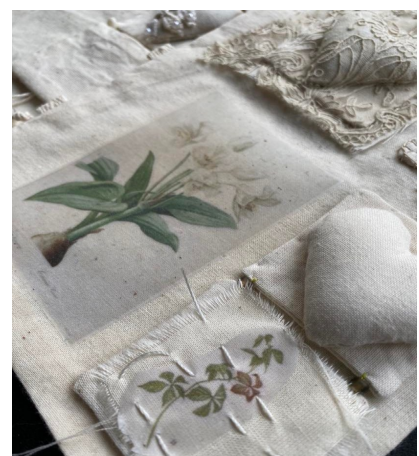
# Introduction

I decided that being honest with you about this workshop is the best way forwards ... this is one of the most frustrating workshops which I teach! You will inevitably find videos and instructions online which imply that transferring images is straightforward, but until you find a way that works for you using the equipment you have access to, you need to be ready for some experimentation and failure, together with (hopefully) some real excitement and satisfaction.

With image transfer there are just so many variables and your results are dependent on the type materials you use (even the make of materials!), the type of printer you have, what your expectations are ... BUT, transferring images onto fabric is undeniably one of the things that we MOST want to be able to do.

I decided a while ago, that the best way to help you with this topic is to tell you things that have worked for me, but maybe more importantly to tell you things that HAVEN'T worked for me, and why I think that might be.

Over the last years, I have managed to transfer images and text onto fabric in a fairly consistent way and produced results that I am happy with, but at the end of the day, it still sometimes messes up my ink-jet printer, messes up my work and frustrates the life out of me! So with that said ... here goes!



**If you have a proprietary image transfer medium, please follow the instructions given with the product.** However, if you'd like to experiment with different possibilities and options here are some pointers:

I've listed the most likely types of printed image you may come across:

## **TYPES OF IMAGE**

### **Photocopies**

The process of photocopying means that the ink remains on the surface of the paper, so it can be physically transferred in various ways. This is the most versatile image type for transfer to fabric, but not everyone has easy access to photocopied images. If you don't have your own printer, this is the best method of getting useable transferable images. Watch out for copyright though!

### **Magazine/Newspaper/Book Images**

Although the process of manufacture will vary, in most books, newspapers and magazines the ink is sitting on the surface of the paper, so it **can** be transferred like a photocopy. However, some images (like leaflets and flyers) will have a laminated coating which means the image is not transferrable.

### **Photographs**

If these are produced commercially, it is unlikely that you will be able to transfer the image, BUT, you can re-photograph digitally, and use an ink-jet printer to transfer onto fabric. (See below).

### **Ink Jet Printed images**

The most common household printers are ink jet (with disposable ink cartridges). ***When ordinary copy paper is use, the ink soaks into the surface of the paper so it is not transferrable.*** However, with the availability of pre-prepared or proprietary papers, ink-jet printed images have become a firm favourite for many textile artists.

I'm going to show you 2 different methods for transferring photocopied or magazine printed images: a) onto plastic film and b) straight onto fabric. Both of these are worth a try if you don't have your own printer.

I will also show you 2 methods of transferring images using an inkjet printer and special paper. These are my preferred options, but they still come with a warning: **Some printers can be very temperamental. I'm afraid that it is trial and error, and I do not accept responsibility for any mishaps or damaged printers!**



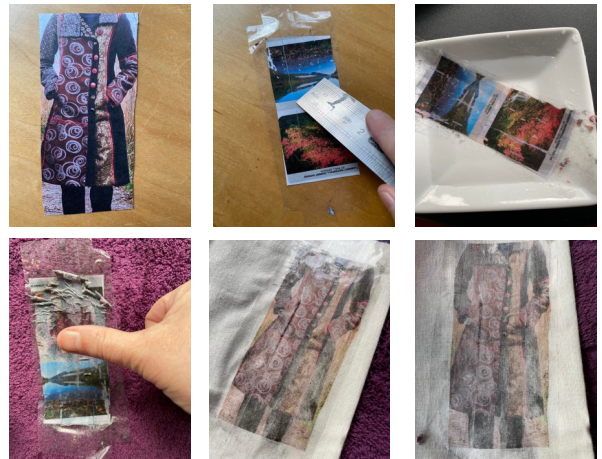
## Transferring Magazine Images using Sticky-backed plastic or cello tape

*(The image will remain the right way round, but behind plastic layer)*

This is one of those clever tricks that you sometimes find out by mistake .. printed images will easily transfer onto sticky tape, and if that tape or plastic is clear, anywhere that was white on the image will 'magically' become transparent when the paper is removed. This is great if you want to transfer text on a white background. I have used this technique to great effect when working on mixed media and paper collage, but you will see that it is possible to successfully incorporate the result into textile work.

This technique is definitely worth a try if you haven't done it before.

- 1) Cover the image with strips of cello tape or a piece of sticky backed plastic.
- 2) Use a bone folder or the edge of credit card or ruler to make sure that the plastic is properly stuck onto the image.
- 3) Place image into a shallow bowl of warm water, and using your fingertips, rub the paper from the image.
- 4) Keep rubbing until no paper residue remains on the sticky bit.



The downside of this technique is obviously that the image will be 'behind' the plastic. I have found that you can use a fine sandpaper to get rid of the really shiny surface without affecting the image, and the plastic is then thin enough and soft enough that you can stitch into it and incorporate the image beautifully into your work. Machine stitching is much easier than hand stitching for these images because of the thickness of fabric plus plastic.

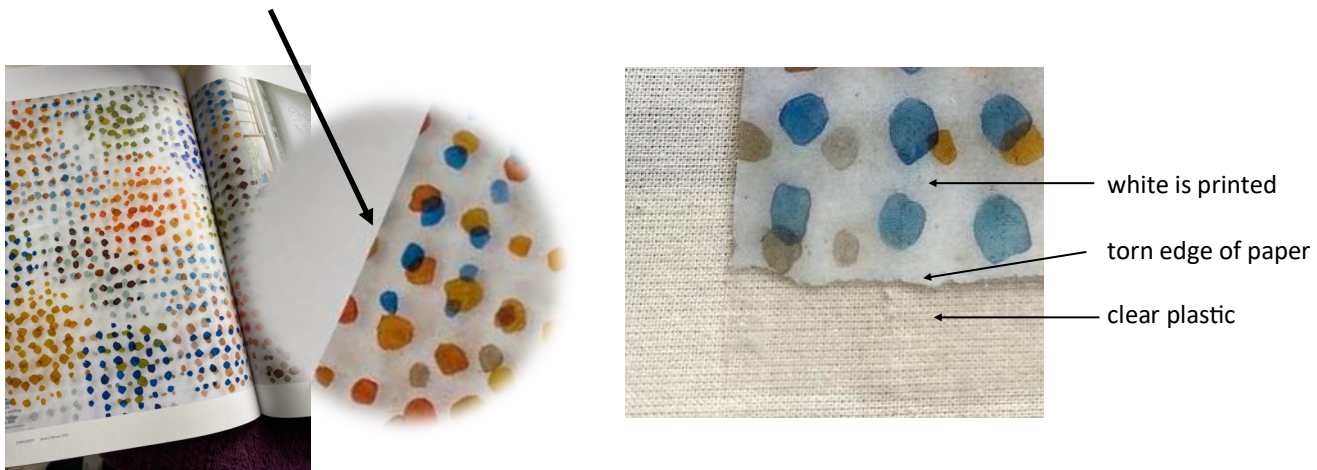
**DO NOT tip the water with paper residue straight down the sink! Use a sieve and dispose of the pulp in a bin, or tip it down the loo.**



## Different Quality of Magazine Printing

You will find that commercially printed literature comes in lots of different qualities, and therefore you will have varying results. If the paper has a laminated surface, you will not be able to transfer the print. Surprisingly however, the cheaper the printing, the better it works with this technique. A couple of things I want to point out ...

With cheaper commercial printing, the white of an image is created by using the white of the paper, so once you have removed the paper, you are left with transparent/non-printed areas. However, although really good quality magazines have some of the best images to transfer, you need to be aware that the white is also printed, along with the other colours. Take a look at the image below which is from 'embroidery' magazine. You can see that the white in the image actually looks rather grey in comparison to the border. When you rub the paper away you will NOT be able to remove the white.



In this example, which is from the Untangled Threads DNA leaflet (mid quality print) an emulsion of white is laid onto the paper BEFORE printing the colours. When you rub the paper away, the emulsion is much harder to rub away (but it will come off with effort) and you will just be left with the colour printing. If you are making quite an 'arty' image, this can be useful because you can decide to leave areas of emulsion to give a 'shabby chic' finish.

You can also see from this example how finely sanding the top surface will remove the 'shiny gloss' from the plastic finish.



## Transferring Photocopied Images straight onto fabric with PVA glue

I have included this section for completeness, but have to say that even using proprietary brands like ModgePodge, I haven't really got results which I have been entirely pleased with. If you find a type of PVA or other transfer medium which works consistently, PLEASE LET ME KNOW!

### **PVA glue or other transfer medium**

*(The image will transfer in reverse.)*

The basic principle of this is that you coat the image with the PVA or transfer medium, press the paper onto the fabric, leave it to dry, then remove the paper leaving just the image on the fabric. *This is a very similar process to that shown previously, when removing the paper from sticky backed plastic transfers.*

- 1) Apply glue to the image.
- 2) Place image face down onto fabric. Smooth out any wrinkles and remove any excess glue.
- 3) Leave to dry (about 12 hours)
- 4) When completely dry, place fabric into a shallow bowl of warm water, and using your fingertips, rub the paper from the image.
- 5) Keep rubbing until no paper residue remains on the fabric.
- 6) Leave the fabric to dry.

**DO NOT tip the water with paper residue straight down the sink! Use a sieve and dispose of the pulp in a bin, or tip it down the loo.**

*The rubbing is the bit which is often problematic ...*

- *If you just keep rubbing you can easily remove the image as well!*
- *If the PVA is child friendly and water-soluble, it will melt and remove the image.*
- *If you think all the paper residue has gone, it might just be transparent when wet. When it's dry it will reappear as a white film over the image.*
- *You need far more patience than I have, because the image really does need to be **completely dry** before rubbing the paper off.*
- *Drying with a heatgun or hair dryer seems to dry the surface into a rubbery film and leave the damp inside!*

I think you can get the sense that I don't like this process. Technology has moved on so fast, that when you have tried image transfer using transfer paper or direct printing using freezer paper, you won't want to go back to this! But I leave it with you ....



# Inkjet Printed Image onto fabric using transfer paper

***There is a difference between Heat Transfer Vinyl, Sublimation Printing and Heat Transfer Paper***

I have only ever used heat transfer paper which can be used with the ink jet printer. It is often called inkjet t-shirt transfer or IRON-ON transfer paper.



My favorite and recommended brand is RAIMARKET. You can buy it direct from them on [www.raimarket.shop](http://www.raimarket.shop) but if you use Amazon you can sometimes find it on special offer. It works out at about 70p for an A4 sheet and comes in packs of 10, 20 and 30 sheets.

**Your image will transfer in reverse.** This is most important to remember if you are using text. Most modern printers will have the facility to print a mirror image. On my computer, when I ask it to print, I change 'media type' from plain paper to 'other papers > t-shirt transfers'. Some programs will have the ability to 'mirror image' actually on the screen before printing.

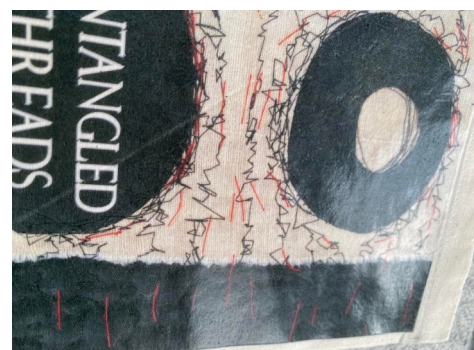
PRINT on the side of the paper without the logo. There are really good instructions in the pack which I have replicated at the end of this section, and there is even an instructional video (if you don't like mine! lol)

[www.raimarket.shop/pages/lighttransferpaper](http://www.raimarket.shop/pages/lighttransferpaper)



Print image. Lay image face down onto fabric. (natural fibres are better because there is less risk of melting or burning the fabric.) The iron should be as hot as possible. It is a combination of heat AND pressure which transfers the image. When cool, peel off backing.

This manufacturer also provides a sheet of silicone paper in the pack. If you want to fix the image (for washing) or if you want a shiny surface, you can place the shiny side of the silicone paper down onto your transferred image and iron it again.





You can print whatever image you like onto the transfer paper, but you might need to be aware of copyright if it is not your own image.

If you are looking for copyright free images, I can recommend

**[www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com)**

*If, like me, you love old-fashioned drawn images, type **botanical illustration** in the search facility!*



I like to work on A5 size. If for any reason the printing goes wrong, or gets chewed up in the printer, you have only wasted half the amount of paper! Don't forget that you can add more than one image to a page and I would recommend filling the space as fully as possible.

Once you have printed your image(s) you can choose to transfer them onto fabric in one go (i.e. onto A5 size fabric) and then tear or cut the fabric as required. Depending on what fabric you have used, you may be able to tear the image as well (calico tears particularly well).



OR, you can cut around the images and apply them separately to your work.



# Image Transfer Paper Instructions

## Step 1: What you need to get started

- Ink jet Printer
- Printing Substrate (T Shirt, Canvas Bag, Apron, cotton Iron — 1400w or higher for best results)
- Suitable FLAT Surface (Solid and hard Table/ Work Top, Floor or similar — **IRONING BOARD SHOULD NEVER BE USED AS IT IS NOT A HARD SURFACE**)
- Silicon Fixing Paper (Supplied and re-usable)

## Step 2: Printing

- Set your Initial Printer/Image to **MIRROR MODE** ('Flip Horizontal') — This is very important, especially if there is any text on your print.
- Print your image onto the paper
- Print the image on the glossy **BLANK SIDE** (Without watermark)

## Step 3-4: Preparation

- Once printed, trim as much excess white areas from around and within the image. It is advisable to leave approx. 5mm white edge around the image if possible.
- Prepare a FLAT solid and hard surface on which to iron
- Switch on your iron and allow to heat up to full temperature for 3-4 minutes
- Do not use steam**

## Step 5: Transferring the image (using Iron)

- Cover the surface on which you are ironing with another T Shirt or pillow case to give it a slight cushioning
- Place the substrate on the surface with the area onto which you are about to transfer facing up, towards you.
- Iron the substrate without the image to warm it up a little and smooth out any creases (about 20 seconds)
- Place the transfer paper with the image printed **face down** onto the substrate. The back/non printed/ watermark side should be facing up.
- Start ironing the image roughly all over so it sticks to the fabric. Then **SYSTEMATICALLY** make sure **ALL AREAS** of the image receive the same amount of heat by moving the iron constantly in **SMALL CIRCLES** and covering all the areas, especially the edges.
- Apply maximum **FIRM and CONSTANT PRESSURE** to the iron. Press hard if possible, as greater pressure will ensure better ink transfer.
- Iron for **about 4-5 minutes** for images in A4 Size (— for smaller images you can shorten the time roughly in proportion).
- It is crucial that **ALL areas of the image receive equal length at ironing and pressure. Insufficient time/pressure will achieve a poor result.**



# Printing directly onto fabric using freezer paper

*To my mind, I have left the **BEST UNTIL LAST ...***

So what is freezer paper?

Freezer paper is a thick white paper with a plastic or wax coating on one side. It is designed to help keep air out of frozen foods, so protecting against freezer burn and loss of moisture .. **BUT**

it has been used by stitchers for years to help with drawing and tracing quilting designs. You can draw a design on the dull side of the paper and cut it out. Then you iron the paper (shiny side down) onto a piece of fabric, then cut around the design. You can re-use the same shape over and over - just peel it off and iron again! This is very clever, and you will find lots of videos and instructions online to

help with this ... **BUT**

If you can attach fabric to it temporarily, you can use it as a 'carrier' for the fabric ... make your printer believe that it is just dealing with a slightly thicker piece of paper, and **PRINT ONTO THE FABRIC DIRECTLY**, then remove the freezer paper!.

This works best using a fine muslin, calico or other thin cotton fabric. The trick is that the total thickness of freezer paper and fabric should be able to pass easily through your printer. **WARNING:** some printers can be very temperamental. Printers which have a manual direct feed are definitely more reliable, as the paper passes straight through, rather than being passed round a roller. This said, it is still not unusual for the fabric to get stuck or for the printer to pull it through at a jaunty angle. I am afraid that it is a bit trial and error, and I don't accept responsibility for any mishaps.

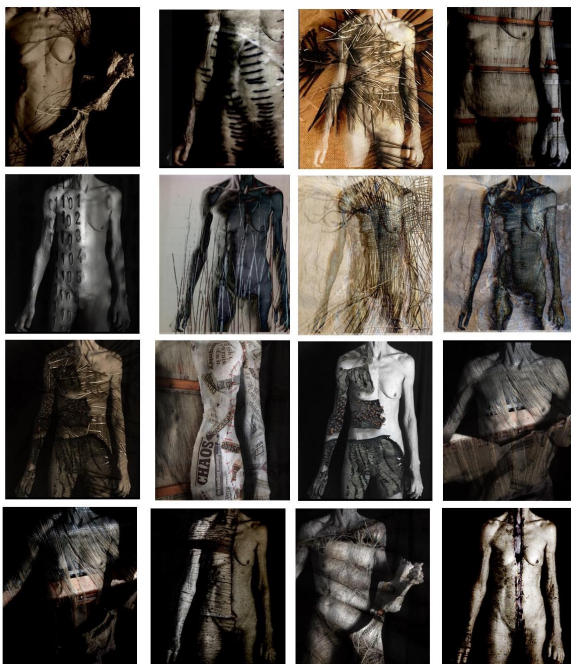
1. Start with a piece of fabric which is slightly larger than your freezer paper.
2. Iron the fabric. It is important not to have any creases.
3. Place the freezer paper shiny side down onto the fabric and iron with a hot iron.
4. Make sure that all the edges are securely fixed down.
5. Iron on both sides. Make sure that there are no air bubbles.
6. Carefully trim the excess fabric from around the freezer paper.
7. It is most important that the 'leading edge' is cut absolutely flush and straight with the paper. Any loose threads or rough edges will cause problems!
8. Feed the paper and fabric into your printer as normal and cross your fingers!!
9. Once printed, peel the fabric from the freezer paper.
10. In my experience, the freezer paper will only stick properly **ONCE**. I use a fresh piece of paper for each print.



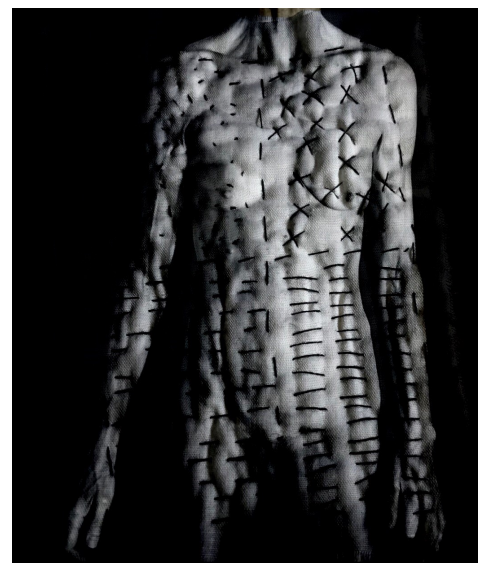
The possibilities for this process are endless. Here is an example of a photograph which was printed onto fabric and used to decorate one of the 1,568 Sawdust Hearts.



Printing images onto muslin or other transparent fabric gives the opportunity to layer and collage images on textiles in a way we might not have thought about before.



In my own work, I am fascinated by the possibilities of manipulating images and then being able to print them onto fabric. Adding stitches which manipulate the surface even further .... rather disturbing when on images of figures?



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## Next Workshop

### 14th December 2022

Workshop 12 of 12

### ***Embroidering Felted Surfaces***

This will be the last of the workshops for 2022.

All 12 of your workshops will remain available to you for as long as you need them. Don't panic or worry if you have fallen behind with the workshops. I will not be putting out a call for your end of year exhibition until later in 2023.

If you have decided not to sign up for another 12 months, you will still receive invites and information as part of the group of 2022.



[www.untangledthreads.co.uk](http://www.untangledthreads.co.uk)