Paper specific coating tips

Vellums: Clearprint and others

Vellums have two characteristics that make coating difficult. First, they tend to curl into straws the instant the coating solution touches the surface of the paper. Secondly, vellum papers do not absorb the solution as readily as thicker papers.

We deal with the first issue by taping the corners of the paper down to the coating surface just prior to coating. Semi-sticky drafting tape is ideal for this. When coating a large piece of paper, it may relax so much that you get waves in the paper that make brushing difficult. Deal with this by quickly and confidently lifting the tape from two or three corners and stretching the paper out flat and then continue brushing.

The second issue is dealt with by reducing the coating solution by roughly half, and then double coating the paper. Use a hair dryer to dry the paper between the first and second coats. Apply the second coat immediately after the first coat has been dried.

Rives BFK and other printmaking paper

Printmaking papers, unlike watercolor papers, do not normally have any surface sizing. This characteristic makes them highly absorbent and consequently the penetration of the coating solution makes the developed print very difficult to clear. Deal with the absorbency issue by slightly increasing the amount of coating solution (maybe 5-10%) and adding one drop of polyvinyl alcohol per 30 drops of total coating solution. Swirl the shot glass around until it is fully dissolved and then coat the paper in the normal manner. Once the solution has been spread over the coating area, let it rest *no more than 30-60 seconds* and then use a hairdryer to dry the solution and "set" it close to the surface of the paper. Allow the paper to re-humidify to ambient humidity for 10-15 minutes before printing.

Kozo, Gampi and other Japanese papers

These papers can yield beautiful platinum prints. You will have to experiment to find the ones that have enough wet strength to withstand the 30 minutes or so of soaking that the platinum printing process requires. The strategy for getting rich prints on these papers is again a variation of the double coating method that is used with vellum. In this instance, however, we maintain the coating volume but reduce the amount of sensitizer and metal in the first coat by 50%. For instance, the first coat might contain 8 drops of ferric oxalate, 8 drops of palladium metal salt and 16 drops of distilled water. The second coat would be a full strength coat of 16 drops of ferric oxalate and 16 drops of palladium metal salt. Use a hair dryer to dry the paper between the first and second coats.