GEL TRANSFER – recipe

Materials:

- a digital photographic print — on soft, high quality paper, e.g. Inkpress DuoMatte 80 (don't use Inkpress EcoMatte, however)
- gloss acrylic gel medium — only the gloss is completely transparent
- receiver material — ~~not paper~~, wood, metal, ceramic tile, glass, skin, etc.
- a spatula — to spread the gel medium (fingers are okay)
- a spoon or roller — to transfer the print with pressure
- a sponge — to remove the paper backing (fingers are okay)
- a tray — to hold warm water

optional tools: hair dryer, towel, strainer, utility knife

Prepare The Photograph

flip the image — horizontal (in Photoshop)

print the digital photo — on Inkpress DuoMatte 80

using the Profile for — Epson Enhanced Matte Paper

with higher contrast	using curves
more detail	using layer sharpening
more saturated tone (color)	using hue/saturation
added grain (optional)	using a filter

coat the print — with **GLOSS GEL MEDIUM**

apply 1 thin even coat in 1 direction with a foam brush, spatula or fingers

dry the gel medium — **completely** with a hair dryer

the gel will become clear when totally dry

apply another thin coat — in the **other** direction

dry completely (until clear, not milky)

apply a third thin coat — and dry completely

let it sit overnight so everything is dry through and through

consider the appearance of the 'brushstrokes' on this top layer

trim the print — to the desired size and remove all white border

cut or tear the paper, depending on the type of edge desired

Remove the Paper Backing

the prepared print must be **completely** dry

immerse the gelled print — in warm water

let it soak — until the backing paper gets saturated

gently apply pressure — to the paper backing

use either a sponge with some 'tooth', or – use your fingers

rub the paper vigorously but carefully

a circular motion may help

this will take some time!

continue — until absolutely **all** paper is removed

the result will be a print embedded in clear plastic gel medium

lay the print — on a towel (optional)

and continue to remove all remnants of the paper backing with a soft sponge

GEL TRANSFER – recipe, cont'd

Prepare the Receiver
- coat the receiver surface with **GLOSS GEL MEDIUM**
  - apply a thin even coat with a foam brush, spatula or fingers
  - consider the appearance of the 'brushstrokes'
- coverage:
- the receiver can be the same size as the print
  - to create a 'photo-object'
- if the receiver is larger than the print, this will create a border
  - consider whether to coat the *entire* surface of the receiver,
  - or only coat the area where the picture will be

Transfer the Print
- The ink embedded in the gel medium will stick to the receiver
- apply the embedded print onto the receiver coated with gel medium
  - some people get better results if the receiver is totally dry
  - some prefer to use tacky medium to act as a glue
- place the print exactly once down it will be hard to move
  - usually the brushstroke side is up, and
  - the previously paper-backed side is down, but . . .
- dry the transferred piece completely
  - using a hair dryer (on the cool setting), or better –
  - let it sit overnight before apply any finishing steps
    - a hot hair dryer can melt your piece!

Cleanup
- strain the paper pulp in the tray of water
- dump the paper pulp into a trash can
- pour the clean water down the drain

Seal the Transfer Print (optional)
- coat the final piece in more **GLOSS GEL MEDIUM**
- for Prints onto a Paper Receiver, or –
- coat the final piece in **MATTE GEL MEDIUM**
  - this will impart a waxy surface, much like encaustic
  - this will be somewhat translucent, not totally transparent
    - this surface can be sanded and recoated for different effects
- there are many other types of gel medium available,
  - with many different textures

Other Options
- Print onto 3D surfaces that compliment,
  - but do not compete with the photographic image
- Use "fake water" (either the gel or the solid) for different effects
- make multiple layered pieces using poured gel medium into a mold
  - and then stacking image fragments, leaving space to 'see through' to lower layers
    - ref: Lary Spaid, painter http://www.larryspaid.com

Credit to: Stephanie Simpson who did the first work with this here at TUCC, Chad Wray who developed the 'tacky' method, and Erin McCann who refined this process again after the gel completely washed off her metal pieces.