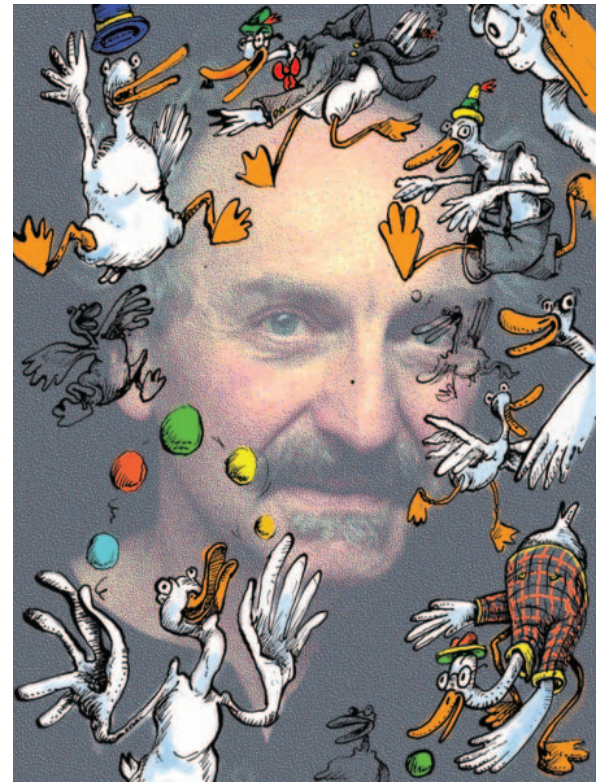


# TIPS FOR SCREEN PRINTING ON CLAYBORD™

By Franz Spohn

Ampersand's Claybord™ is a wonderful surface for screen printing. This ultra smooth rigid panel will not stretch or change during the printing process ensuring perfect registration every time. Warping, tearing, and shrinking are virtually eliminated from the printing process. Claybord holds up to heavy saturations of transparent color and very wet applications. The smoothness of the board allows you achieve incredible detail and allows you to reduce the dot size when using a finer mesh screen. Claybord's unique clay coating also allows the artist to handwork each print and scratch back into the surface for unique prints or details not achievable on paper. Claybord accepts all types of printer's inks and is so much easier to handle than paper in terms of drying and storing. When finished, your prints are ready to frame without any additional work. If this is your first time trying out Claybord for screen printing, the following tips will help you achieve successful results.



Print Image by Franz Spohn

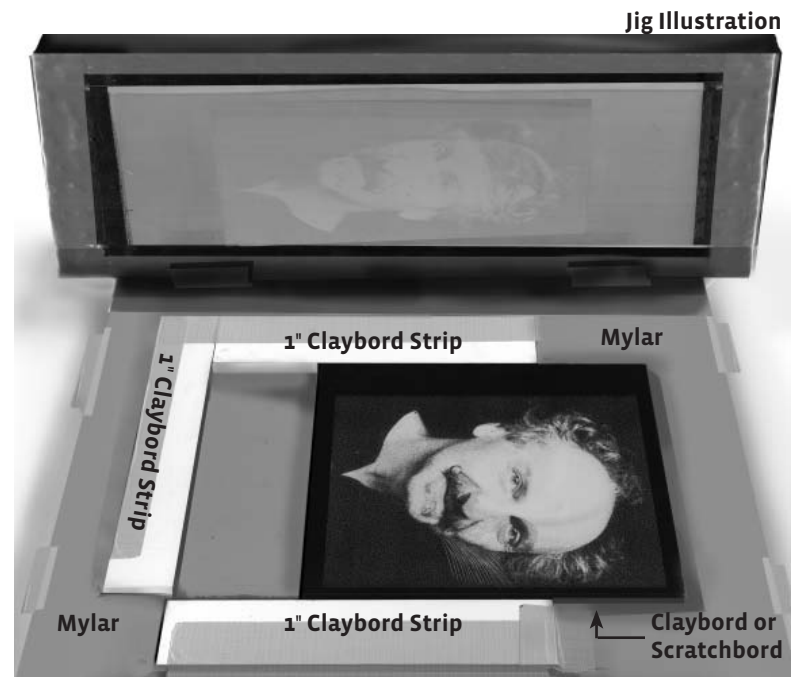
## Prepping the Claybord

Claybord is a very absorbent surface. The kaolin clay will dull out your first layers of color whether working in oil-based or water-based inks, so I recommend sealing the surface first. However, please note that if you decide not to seal the Claybord, you can achieve a variety of interesting and layered effects without sealing. I primarily work with water-based inks. I first seal the Claybord surface by screen printing a thin, even flat layer of Speedball Overprint Varnish. This seals the surface and prepares it to accept the inks so that they don't soak into the surface.

## Creating a Registration Jig

Claybord is a 1/8" thick rigid panel. In order to facilitate printing and to ensure perfect registration, I create a jig that will hold the Claybord in place while I'm screen printing. If I'm working with an 8x10 image, I cut down another 8x10 Claybord resulting in four 1" strips. I then place the 8x10 Claybord that I'm going to print, on a sturdy piece of mylar (.01 thickness). Your piece of mylar has to be large enough to stick out from under the screen because you will use it to align the board with the stencil on the screen. Place the cut strips around the 8x10 on the mylar and mark their position. Glue them down to the mylar with epoxy glue making sure that when you're done, the 8x10 fits snugly into the jig as illustrated. You'll want to leave a side of the jig without stripping so that you can easily lift the board from the jig (as illustrated). To register, simply insert a panel in the jig, place under the screen, and use the edges of the mylar sticking out from under the screen to align the board with your stencil. Tape the mylar securely to the printing surface and use to register for subsequent panels.

The registration jig also provides a transitional support on which to start and end the squeegee during the printing process. Without this, the squeegee will move the panels or stress the screen fabric and stencil when the blade of the squeegee comes in contact with the edge of the panel resulting in mis-registration and distortion of the image.



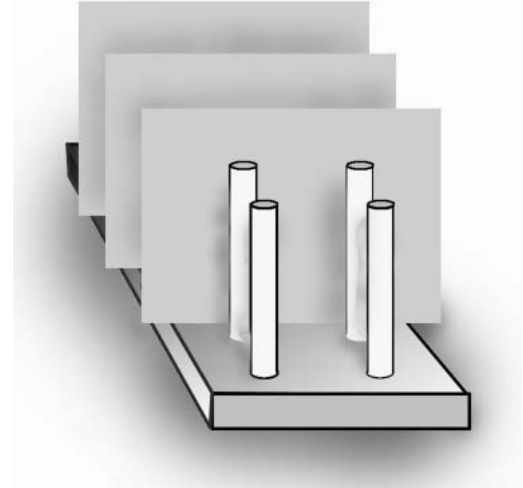
Jig Illustration

## Helpful Printing Tips

**Print off contact.** Elevate the front of the screen with a 1/4" piece of foam board so that the fabric of the screen is not touching the surface of the Claybord. This enables the snap back of the fabric when I'm printing and keeps the Claybord from sticking to the screen.

**Don't use excessive pressure or speed to print.** Claybord's surface is so smooth and if sealed as recommended, the inks do not absorb into the surface. Therefore the inks will bleed into the non-image areas if too much pressure is applied with the squeegee. If you are concerned that your details will dry up, then use adequate amounts of ink retarder rather than relying on hard pressure to keep your inks open. Also, make sure to use a squeegee with a nice, sharp blade.

**Create your own easy to handle drying rack (as shown).** Claybord is really easy to handle and dry since it is rigid unlike paper. You can create a simple drying rack with a board and upright supporting dowel rods. An edition of 20 can dry on a constructed board that is about 15" and can be placed right next to the printing area within arm's reach - much more convenient than a drying rack or line. Also, it is much more expedient than trying to find enough table surface to lay out the prints.



Drying Rack

## Other Exciting Possibilities

Ampersand also has Black Scratchbord™ that is great to print on with Speedball's opaque fabric inks. You can use this surface one of two ways.

1. **Scratch and Then Print:** You can use etching tools to scratch in the image on the Scratchbord as you would for traditional scratchboard, revealing the white. Then, use transparent inks to screen colors onto the white image.
2. **Print and Then Scratch:** Speedball's opaque fabric inks work splendidly on the board. I like to use the black of the surface to create the linear element so that the stencils print the "fill-in" shapes with color. The opaque fabric inks are dense enough to cover the black of the Scratchbord and have a shimmering or opalescent effect. Then, an additional scratched texture can be applied to enhance the overall effect.
3. **Cut outs and Printing:** Another advantage of printing on the boards is that the printed shapes can be cut out with a scroll saw and incorporated in constructions. The boards or other pieces can be screwed, glued or otherwise attached to create box-less shadow boxes, tableaux or very hardy "pop-up" books. Consider the construction elements in Red Groom's or Frank Stella's dimensional prints.

## Biography Franz Spohn



Franz Spohn earned his M.F.A. from the Ohio State University in screen printing and drawing in 1975. Franz is currently among the tenured art faculty at the Edinboro University of Pennsylvania where he teaches screen printing. Franz has exhibited widely in solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally in both museum and commercial gallery venues including The Museum of Arts and Design in NYC, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, Pacifico Gallery in NYC and The Marian Lockes Gallery in Philadelphia. Among Franz's illustration credits are children's books and book covers for Bantam, Doubleday and Dell publishers. Commissioned projects include works for The National Science Museum in London and the Department of Parks and Recreation in NYC. Franz is the host and co-producer of the instructional video series Eureka! The Creative Art Series, seen on many PBS stations nationally and in Canada and he is the recipient of an NEA grant. Franz regularly presents workshops and lectures throughout the United States and Canada.

**For more screen printing techniques on Claybord and Scratchbord:**



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