

SKETCHBOOK ADVENTURES

Chapter 5: Stamping and Image Transfer Techniques

When I first wanted to make multiple prints of an image I didn't know how to do it. I had to work with the small amount of resources and knowledge that I had. This was over 10 years ago and the Internet wasn't the awesome resource it is now. Back then most of us were still connecting to the Internet through dial-up, which in case you are too young to remember was extremely slow and went through your telephone landline. I really wanted to learn how to screenprint but it was actually faster for me to come up with my own way than it would have been to look it up online.

I ended up carving my image out of card stock with a craft knife and making my own stencil. It worked really well for a few prints and then the ink would soak into the paper and it would rip and I'd have to cut the image all over again. Then I met a fellow maker at a craft show who taught me how to screenprint. I apprenticed with him in his garage/workshop while punk rock music blasted and I learned everything about screenprinting.

I was finally able to create multiple prints of an image, which saved me tons of time (and rescued my fingers from blisters that I got spending hours carving my image with a craft knife). I loved being able to not only print repeat images in a short time but also put my image on just about anything. That's when my love affair with screenprinting began. That devotion evolved into a passion for other printing techniques like stenciling, image transfers and stamping.

As much as I loved screenprinting the "right" way, I'm glad I was forced to come up with my own method because it taught me to get creative and use what I have when I want to learn a new technique. Working with what I have on hand has helped me expand my printing, stamping and transfer methods. I've carved stamps from erasers, potatoes and even wine corks. I've experimented with all sorts of image transfers like using gel medium, shipping tape and acetone. The thing I love about the stamping and image transfer techniques in this chapter (much like the DIY screenprinting method I taught myself) is that they require a minimal financial investment but the possibilities are vast. In this chapter we'll explore stamping and image transfers, which are a few of my favorite techniques for adding images to your sketchbook pages.



**The typewriter-style letters on the page from my sketchbook are letter stamps.*

STAMPING

A stamp is a carving (usually in rubber) that has raised areas that make an impression on a surface when you coat the stamp in ink and press it onto something. Pre-made stamps are an awesome way to add images and patterns to your piece. The modernization of craft supplies over the past few years means that now there's a wide variety of pre-made stamps to choose from. [Yellow Owl Workshop](#) has an amazing selection of stamps featuring modern motifs and classic shapes. I love their [circus set](#), [San Francisco set](#), [beach set](#) and [mushroom and snail set](#). They also make a [kit](#) so you can carve your own stamps. (Revisit the Supplies chapter for more stamping supply resources.)

Even though there's a great collection of pre-made stamps out there as well as companies that create custom stamps, I still really enjoy carving my own custom stamps. It's super easy and I find the act of carving to be meditative.

In the video and tutorials at the end of this chapter we'll explore some stamping techniques as well as learn how to carve a custom stamp.



**The bird and birdcage on this page from my sketchbook are Yellow Owl Workshop stamps.*

Stamping tips:

- To use a pre-made stamp simply press it into your stamp pad 2-3 times and then press it onto your paper. If you press too lightly on either the pad or your paper your image will be light and if you press too firmly on your paper the lines can smudge or be uneven. Practice a few times before you add it to your page.
- If your stamp is bigger than your ink pad you can press parts of it onto the ink pad or even run it over the pad a few times.
- When you press the stamp to your paper be sure to use firm, even pressure so that all areas of your stamp meet the page.
- I generally don't clean my stamps because the ink is usually dry before I want to use it again but if you want to keep your stamps pristine just wipe them with warm water and a mild soap.
- Be sure to clean your stamp if you want to use it with a different color of ink before the first ink you used is dry. Make sure your stamp is completely dry or your image will bleed and blur.
- The surface you're stamping on should be smooth or your image will come out wonky. If you're working in your sketchbook this shouldn't be an issue.
- I suggest using waterproof ink so you can add color or detail to your stamp with markers or watercolors.



**This is a custom stamp I carved. You can watch the process in the video at the end of the chapter.*

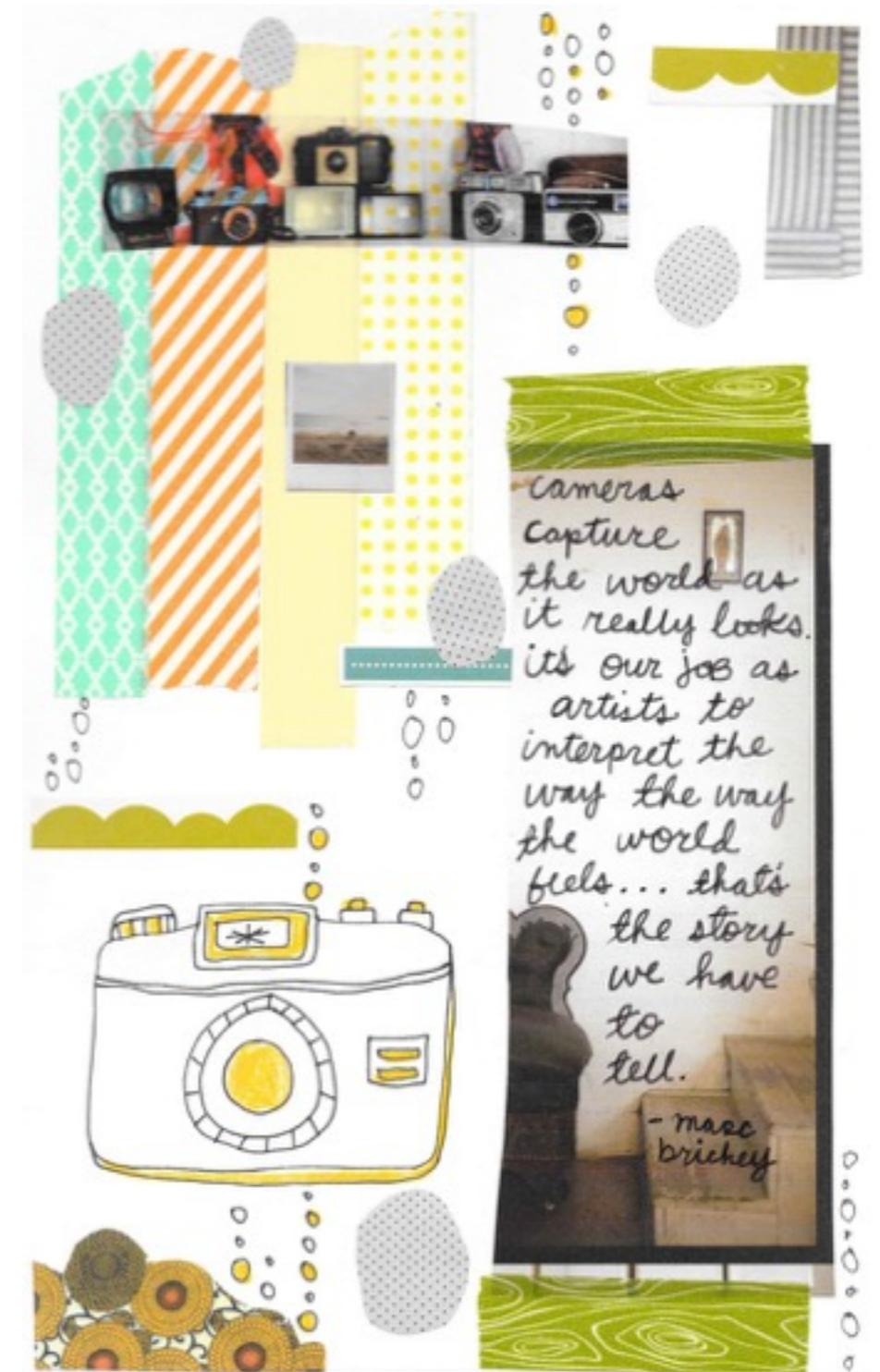


IMAGE TRANSFERS

An image transfer is a technique that allows you to take an image and put it onto another surface. The first time I did an image transfer I used a gel medium technique and when I saw my image appear on the piece of wood I transferred it onto, it was like watching a magic trick! There are so many techniques to create image transfers but we'll focus on the two I find most useful when you're working in your sketchbook.



**The image of the four people standing under the yellow umbrella is an image transfer.*



**The strip of cameras at the top of this page from my sketchbook is a shipping tape image transfer.*

One of the things I love and hate about image transfers is that most image transfer techniques don't offer full control of how the image comes out. With stamping you have a pretty good idea of exactly how the image will look once you add it to your page. With image transfers there's a bit more wiggle room. I like this because it forces me to let go of any pre-conceived notions of perfection but sometimes it can be hard to give up control in your piece. This is a great opportunity to accept imperfections and give in to the process of making.

You can also buy pre-made transfers. Using Letraset letter transfers (see the supply chapter) is one of my favorite ways to add text to a piece. I don't have to worry about my penmanship, they come in a variety of fonts and you can transfer them onto just about any type of paper. To use pre-made transfers simply place them with the transfer side down on your paper and rub the back vigorously with a bone folder or other hard, smooth object.

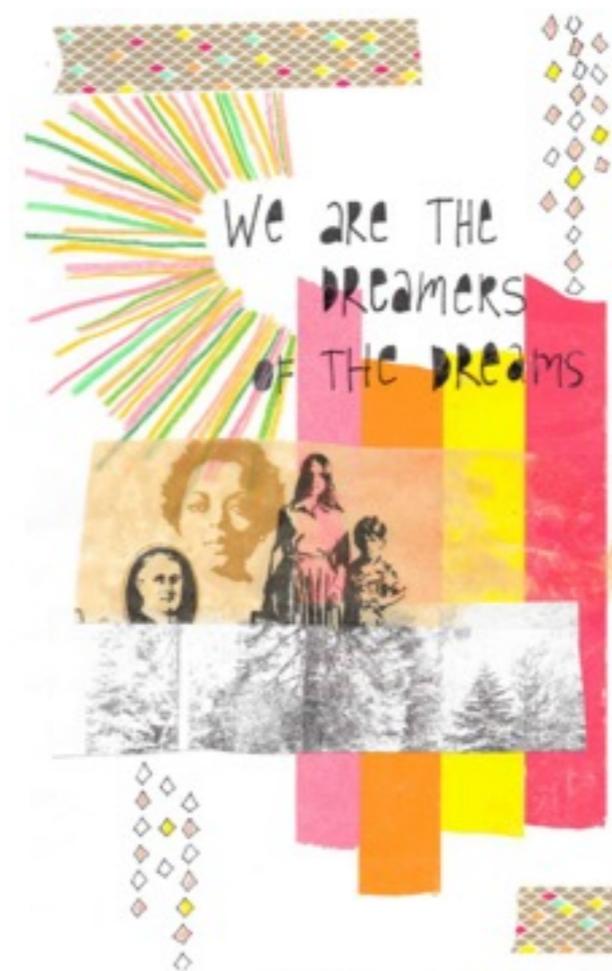
The two techniques we'll work with in this chapter are shipping tape transfers and blender pen (sometimes called toner cloner pens) transfers. I love these two transfer techniques because they're simple, inexpensive and have a variety of applications.

In the video and tutorials at the end of this chapter you'll learn how to do both types of image transfers.

I hope you fall in love with stamping and image transfers like I did. If you do, I suggest challenging yourself to find new ways to print and transfer images. I've tried all sorts of things, some of which worked (like using acrylic paint to transfer an image) and some of which didn't (like creating a stamp out of a Styrofoam cup – FYI it wasn't thick enough and was too flimsy and broke apart when I tried to carve it). Working in your sketchbook is your chance to tap into your creativity and ingenuity to create something new that reflects your unique point of view and vision. That doesn't just apply to what you create but how you create it. Look around your house and seek out unconventional materials (like I did when I made a tiny wine cork stamp). It's awesome when a new method you come up with works but even when it doesn't, it is not a failure because chances are you learned something along the way.



**The camera image is a blender pen transfer.*



**The image of the people is a shipping tape transfer. I love how you can see the colors of the washi tape underneath since the transfer is semi-transparent.*