

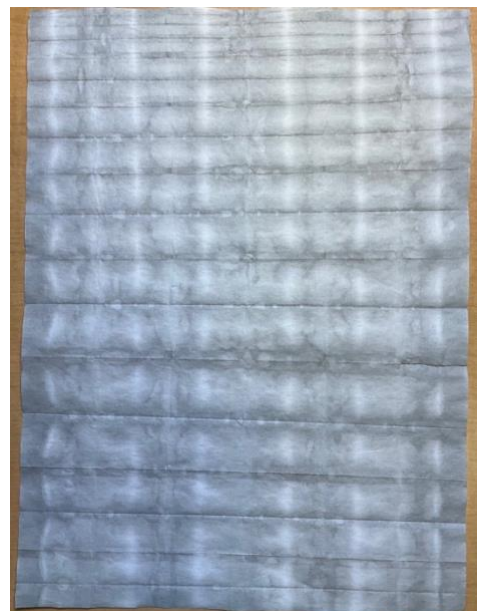
## Material trials Project 2: substrate, media, moving from idea to workable action

Test out fist as resist ideas:

“1) a crumpled or gathered bit of fabric or paper is pinched or fisted in my hand so that the clenched hand is the exclusion agent. I then dunk the material and my hand in the dye – possibly coffee, tea, ink”

At the left here is a crumpled bit of rice paper fisted in my hand, dunked in coffee. Utterly uninteresting pattern once it dried

At the right is a multi-fold rice paper. Tried dunking these in coffee or in ink.... Below left is the coffee dunk, below right diluted ink Ink was more successful but the patterns are too geometric to interest me.



“2) a layer of gel medium is applied to the substrate and while it is still wet I use my fist to press into the medium, creating pits and peaks in the medium. Once it dries I can apply ink, dye, charcoal or graphite powder to make the fist resist patterns visible.”



At left here I tried scrunching fabric in my fist with gel medium, and at right I made prints with my open hand, my side-of-fist and my knuckles on rice paper with gel, then left them to dry.

I tried dipping the fabric in dilute ink but the result was uninteresting.

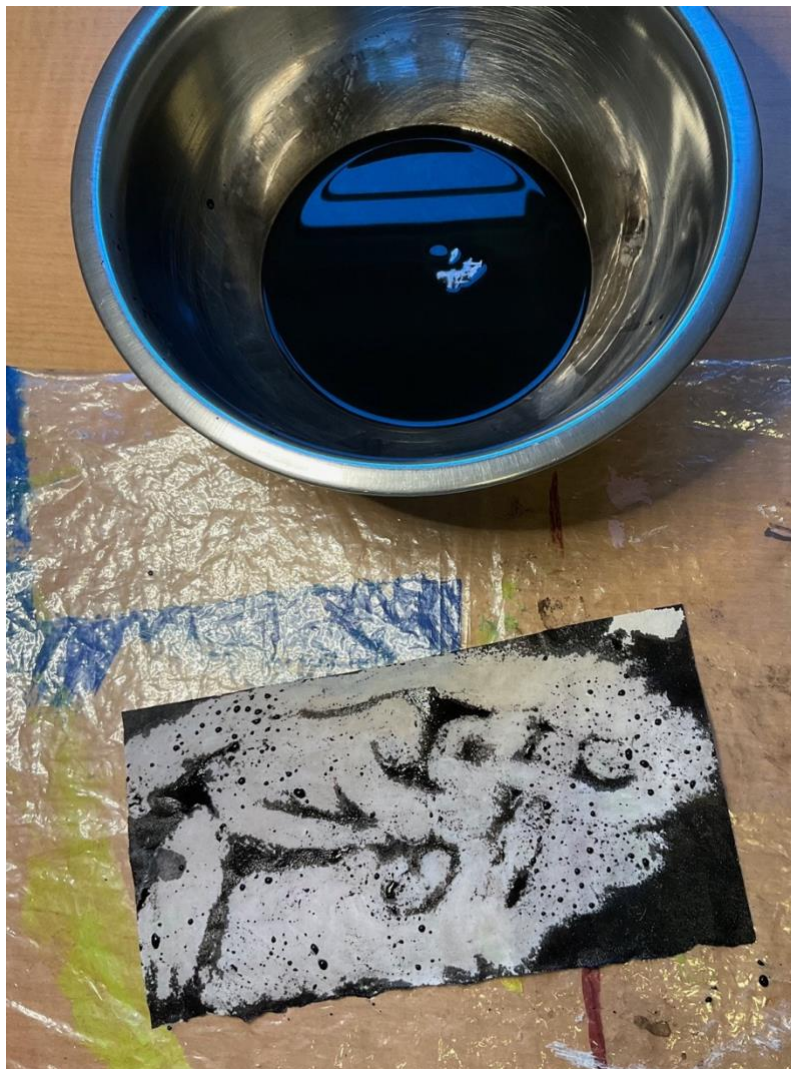


On the rice paper, I added a trial of yellow-tinted wax medium (more about that later) where the blue magnet shows on the top picture. I then used a sponge dipped in dilute ink to dampen the whole surface.

At left you see in white resist the prints of my hand in the gel medium, and also the outcome of the yellow-tinted wax.



I got excited about the wax medium, so effective at occluding or partially occluding the ink from the rice paper. Rather than my hand shaping the resist, I could perhaps just draw a hand with the resist material, extending this metaphor of resist / release. Did a quick tracing of a hand I'd sketched, using rice paper over the original sketch, and drawing with the wax.



Really liked the outcome.

It was tricky seeing the wax on the translucent paper well enough to draw.

So I wondered about colouring it.

This sent me to the Buddhist literature to explore the significance of colour with respect to Buddhist teachings on letting go.

COLOUR: There are several strains of Buddhism and Buddhist Art with different ideas about colours. But some commonalities: yellow (and sometimes orange) is associated with enlightenment and illumination, black signifies ignorance. Monk's robes are yellow or orange, dyed traditionally with turmeric or saffron. Decided I should try colouring wax with turmeric.



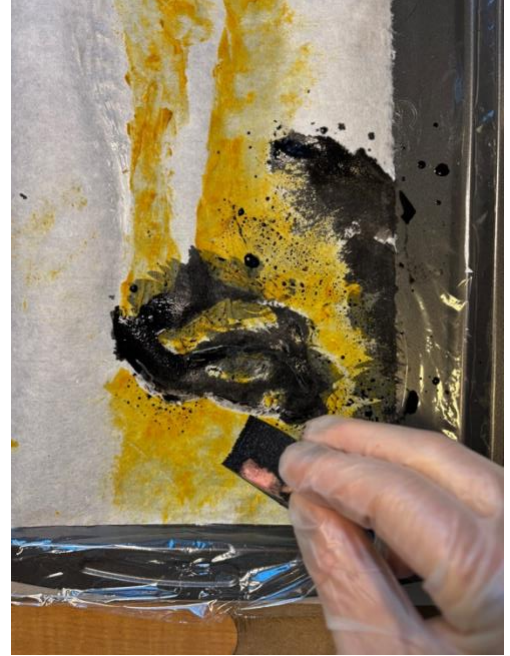
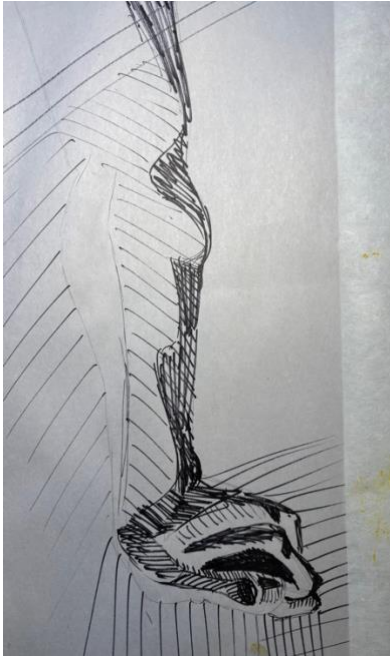
Mix turmeric into Dorland's wax medium.  
Draw on rice paper. Dunk in dilute ink. Blot dry



Interesting outcome...



Next iteration – thinking about a way to make 3 tones not two, to give my hands more form. Trials with a different hand drawing (wasn't a good hand position, in the end, but worked as a learning tool) where I used the gel medium or untinted wax as my lightest value, the turmeric/wax mix as my middle value, and the black ink for darkest value. Switched to using a sponge to distribute the diluted black ink. Switched to unsized rice paper.



⇐ Gel medium as lightest value here.

Untinted wax as the lightest value here ⇒

I think the wax has better potential for a pleasing transition between zones. The gel medium is too contrasting in texture. Plus, wax is more suited to my theme...



## **Here's the state of affairs as of March 2:**

Threaded through all this materials testing, I am pondering my theme. How do I represent this Buddhist-tinged Letting Go, in a way that brings the substrate and media and my ideas into alignment?

I'm very interested in the way Letting Go isn't a one-off. In meditation, I return to the breath again and again, letting go of wandering thoughts. In life, I encounter good times or challenges, meet my own familiar grasping or resistance, and let them go, again. I am beginning to see that repetition will support my message in this work of art.

I imagine multiple versions of clenched hand, released hand being presented in this art work, one following another following another, maybe 20 or 30 multiples to tell the story about how I notice grasping, then let it go, again and again. Perhaps these are hanging in a line, one after another, at eye level, where the viewer walks along to see the pattern. Each version has unique shading and presence, just as in life the situations we meet differ each time, but the practice of noticing the clench and letting it go is patiently repetitive.

Media and substrate: Buddhism came to the west from Asia, and I have selected materials deeply connected to Asian culture and art – rice paper, ink, turmeric, colours of yellow and black representing enlightenment and ignorance. Wax medium has no Asian connection that I'm aware of, but I am enjoying its metaphoric connection to my theme... wax is being used as a "resist", wax has qualities of stickiness. The version I've used to date in my trials is commercial (Dorlands) and it contains natural ingredients like beeswax and resin, but also oil products like paraffin and mineral spirits... it may be possible to use other materials to the same end...

## **Things to follow up now:**

- Test alternatives to commercial wax
- Refine my drawings of hands to the best possible versions of open and closed fist, in that they are reducible to simplified value fields but still persuasively read as hands!
- Once the drawings are ready, start making multi tracings of each one, drawing in untinted and yellow-tinted wax, then on to inking.
- Consider how the hands can be sequenced, displayed so the viewer can walk along a line of them at roughly eye level...