ART2LIFE ACADEMY

Nicholas Wilton: Hey, everyone. It's Nicholas Wilton, and I'm here in Amy Torgeson's studio and we're diving into ... Amy's a collage artist and printmaker, and we're diving into all the ins and outs of block printing, monoprinting, silk screening, and boy, there's a lot here, so we're just going to get going, because I'm afraid we can't cover all this. There's so many possibilities. When you come into your studio, for me it's like, "How did you do this? How did you make that?" How do we start this thing?

Amy Torgeson: We can start by talking about block printing, which is a really easy thing to do at home because the tools are really accessible, it cleans up really easily, and block printing or relief printing is basically where you're carving into either a wooden block, linoleum, which is stiffer, or these rubber blocks.

Nicholas Wilton: And what's cool about this is that this can integrate in with your painting or whatever.

Amy Torgeson: Yes.

Nicholas Wilton: This is just an add-on.

Amy Torgeson: You can take this block and, with the right ink, just put it right onto a board that you're working on. This works with clay, this works with paper.

Nicholas Wilton: And this is a rubber-

Amy Torgeson: Yes.

Nicholas Wilton: Just a bit of rubber that-

Amy Torgeson: I actually saved my sticky here. This is a Speedy-Carve Speedball, and it's just a really easy entry point into block printing, because it's not difficult to carve. There are some that are even easier to carve, but they tend to crumble a little bit so I like this particular-

Nicholas Wilton: Can you get bigger sizes?

Amy Torgeson: You can get it in all different kinds of sizes, yeah. I just tend to start with the four by six, but one of the things that's indicative of block printing are these extra lines that you see, because you're carving away, you can see in this [crosstalk 00:02:08] image, you're removing the negative space, basically, and leaving what's going to be printed.

Amy Torgeson: But stylistically, and this is completely up to the person, how much stray marks you leave is up to you. So you'll see people who completely cut around the item and so it becomes more of a stamp, or you'll see where you've got more of the markings.

Nicholas Wilton: Right, right. Where it's carved out.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. This is just on an envelope, but if you see something like this and you see these stray marks, it's an indication to you, "Oh, this was probably block printed."

Nicholas Wilton: What I think's so cool about it is, and I don't know why this is like this, but there's an immediacy about it, that it's just not fussy.

Amy Torgeson: Not fussy, yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: It's just like, boom, and it's gone, and that's what is the appeal. If I was to paint those green ... It just doesn't have the same thing. We just feel that there's just two things happening here. It's like, boom, boom.

Amy Torgeson: There's a utility to it, right?

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, I love that.

Amy Torgeson: I can just put this on, and this green shape can just be the back of the block and the front of the block can be the carving, so you've just got both sides.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, I see. Interesting.

Amy Torgeson: So pretty basic steps. You can take an image from your sketchbook or you can grab source material from a magazine and trace it, but I always start with a piece of tracing paper, and I trace the size of my block on the tracing paper just so I know how much space I'm working with.

Nicholas Wilton: It's like you're cropping. Yeah, yeah.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. So now I know, okay, this is my work area, and I often use very abstract shapes. This happened to be tufts of snow that I saw that I then just ... Whatever. Doesn't need to be ... Then I can grab whatever shape I'm looking for and trace it, trace my shapes here. Then, because when

you're printing, when you're putting it down it's going to be backwards, but then when you're printing again you're flipping it over.

Nicholas Wilton: So they end up with that-

Amy Torgeson: Yes.

Nicholas Wilton: I see, okay. That makes sense, yeah.

Amy Torgeson: That's why the tracing paper's really helpful. You can go right to the block, but let's say you're doing text. The text would need to be backwards.

Nicholas Wilton: It'll be backwards, yeah. So if you draw it and then trace it, yeah, okay.

Amy Torgeson: It's just a little bit of a help, but if you want to go straight to the block and just have to think through that reversal piece. So you burnish the pencil drawing with your fingernail or some implement, and then it's left on your block like this, right?

Nicholas Wilton: Right, right.

Amy Torgeson: Then what you decide is, do I want to carve away all of this space around and only be left with these three shapes and then I'm carving the white space in between, so what's left is the raised area? Or you can do the reverse, which would be more of a minimal kind of line drawing. You can get really simple tools at any art store, and it's actually pretty meditative. I always start with the larger areas around, and you're taking one of your bigger tools or gauges and use one hand to hold it and don't put your hand here, which we do often, and you're just pushing it. Not very hard. You don't have to go very deep.

Nicholas Wilton: Boy, this comes out so evenly.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. You can definitely do this with kids. And then just move the block around.

Nicholas Wilton: Wow.

Amy Torgeson: It's a nice meditative exercise. Then you can think about the direction that you do these carvings, because when you have the stray marks-

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, that's going to be part of it.

Amy Torgeson: -if you do it haphazard, that will give you a certain look. Different artists will play that up or push it back, depending on what they're going for. Sometimes the background really is playing a role.

Amy Torgeson: Once you've done your carving and you can decide that you want to keep it a square and just bevel the edges, so you lose the edges-

Nicholas Wilton: So you don't have it, right. I see.

Amy Torgeson: -or you can use an X-Acto and cut out your shape, so it's more like a stamp.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, yeah, right. And they're totally reusable, you're just creating this arsenal of cool shapes.

Amy Torgeson: You just wash them off, yeah. And then save the cuttings, because then this becomes an interesting shape that you can just print, or something like this. Then, when you're ready to ink up ... Grab this. I'm using just basic water-based block printing ink. This happens to be Blick. This is Speedball.

Nicholas Wilton: And it's water-based, you said?

Amy Torgeson: Water-based, so that means it's not going to work with wet media once it's dry. It will run. I'll talk about what you can use if you want it permanent. I just mix it on the Plexi here. You take a rubber brayer, just mix your color.

Nicholas Wilton: You just mix right on the palette.

Amy Torgeson: I do, because it's pretty thick. With the screen printing ink, I'll mix it in containers and then put it on, but with this block printing ink-

Nicholas Wilton: And there's no water that you mix with it?

Amy Torgeson: You could, but it gets runny pretty quickly. You're looking for that tacky sound. That's the right consistency. This is too thick, but you get this. Sometimes you can put a phone book out, an old phone book, and just put your excess ink-

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, and then turn the pages and-

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. Or I usually have-

Nicholas Wilton: That's finally a use for a phone book. They deliver them still.

Amy Torgeson: Yes, I know. They do.

Nicholas Wilton: It's like, "Perfect, thank you."

Amy Torgeson: Or you can just have a couple different Plexi plates out and sometimes I usually just start over if it's gotten too thick.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, it's a sound. It's like a ...

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, exactly. You listen for the sound, and then ...

Nicholas Wilton: Do you ever, as you're doing this, and now you see you're drawing, you're like, "Oh, I got to fix it"?

Amy Torgeson: Absolutely. You can carve, print, and then make your modifications. Like, "Oh, wait, there are too many stray marks there for me."

Nicholas Wilton: Then you wash this off and then go back and-

Amy Torgeson: Sometimes I just carve it even with the ink on it, because it's water-based, so you're doing that. Then the lightweight papers, the Japanese papers, take the ink really, really nicely.

Nicholas Wilton: Is this a rag paper? It's beautiful.

Amy Torgeson: You know, actually, I don't remember which one this is. I use the Okawara a lot, but I added that, so I'd have to look it up. I don't remember.

Nicholas Wilton: We'll provide links for these.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. I always put ... You could, theoretically, put the paper on top, but I think you have a little more control when you're putting the block on here. You're just pressing lightly, and then your print.

Nicholas Wilton: God, it's beautiful.

Amy Torgeson: And each time you print, you get a different sense of, "Okay, I wanted more ink next time or more pressure," and then if you print on scrap papers, that can add some visual interest to it.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, and what I love ... These would become great collage papers. You could just go crazy.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, definitely.

Nicholas Wilton: There's something, and I think it's because the way the paint goes down, it's not brushed and there's these little recesses and-

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. With this block printing, I think sometimes the simpler, bolder shapes translate the best. If you want to do much more detailed

carvings, sometimes the linoleum is a better surface to work on than the rubber blocks.

Nicholas Wilton: That's the hard clay one.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: Okay.

Amy Torgeson: Then, so let's see. Oh, when I'm using just little abstract shapes, I've got my carved block and then I've got my solid, because if I want to go through and do-

Nicholas Wilton: So you made two of them?

Amy Torgeson: I made two.

Nicholas Wilton: You made two.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, I've got my two. So I've got my one color that's the solid, and then I'm doing an offset with the line.

Nicholas Wilton: It's literally offset. It doesn't register quite ... Because you can't, and you don't want them anyway.

Amy Torgeson: You can. You can, but I'm just not as interested in that.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, yeah.

Amy Torgeson: But a lot of times people ... If you want to do a multicolor, then you can do what's called a reduction print, where each time you print your first run is a certain amount of carving, then you go back and you carve more and do your second color, or you're using multiple blocks.

Nicholas Wilton: I see.

Amy Torgeson: And if you're using multiple blocks, you're going to need to register that.

Nicholas Wilton: So they're in the exact spot.

Amy Torgeson: Exactly. And then once you have your ink on here, I always think, okay, now this is where I can go back and ...

Nicholas Wilton: I think this is one of those things where you put the materials out and then you've got all these materials out and you're just going to start looking around to do stuff.

Amy Torgeson: Right. Oftentimes if I'm done and I think, "Okay, what do I want to use this for?" and I start scraping across here, or I add water to it, then you can take your paper and press it right onto the plate and you're just getting a texture.

Nicholas Wilton: To create eight pieces of texture.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, exactly. So we can roll-

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, my god.

Amy Torgeson: -just right onto here. Who knows what this will look like when it's printed? A lot of times I'll just take one individual leaf. Let's see. We're just going to press ... You can do this with any number of objects.

Nicholas Wilton: God, amazing. I wouldn't have thought that. It feels so much like-

Amy Torgeson: And then it even printed on my scrap.

Nicholas Wilton: What was that?

Amy Torgeson: This was my scrap that I pressed on the top.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, wow. Yeah, I think I like that one better. Wow.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: It's amazing how much it feels like the thing.

Amy Torgeson: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So then I look here and I'm like, "Okay, there's something interesting going on here." Right? Just from the impression.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, this is a palette.

Amy Torgeson: So let's see what happens. Who knows? This may not transfer, but then you get this.

Nicholas Wilton: Wow, beautiful.

Amy Torgeson: For the mixed media artist, just as a method for just creating collage papers, either carving the block or using the Plexi, yeah, you can draw into it ...

Nicholas Wilton: I'm just wondering how much of this ...

Amy Torgeson: Cool. Love that. You can play with ... I call this the noise behind. You can experiment with how much ink is going to create, and then-

Nicholas Wilton: Right, right. Yeah, that's so cool.

Amy Torgeson: -maybe if you knew what shape you wanted to do you'd put less ink down, so there'd be less noise on the outside, right?

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, right, right, right.

Amy Torgeson: But I like that look, too, with it through there.

Nicholas Wilton: It's amazing how ... I don't know why it does that, but I guess it just ... I don't know. The absorption is doing something. That's very cool.

Amy Torgeson: So these, we've been using the water-based inks. If you want to work into an acrylic painting, then-

Nicholas Wilton: Right, so you don't want it to run. This is like a watercolor. This'll just erode.

Amy Torgeson: Yes, exactly. So then I would use the screen printing ink, and you're going to do the same thing. I mix the screen printing inks in just Tupperware, like this, and then I take spoonfuls and put it on the Plexi, roll it out in the same way, but-

Nicholas Wilton: They're thick, super thick. Same thing.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, we can do one here. The difference is that you're better off using a foam brayer with this, because the screen printing ink just doesn't really adhere to the rubber.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, right, because it doesn't absorb on there.

Amy Torgeson: You know what? I need you to just grab a spoon.

Nicholas Wilton: I just think cutting these pieces out, so cool.

Amy Torgeson: You just put it on here, and then you're rolling it out in the same way. So there's a little bit more of a texture when you're using these foam rollers, but it doesn't really translate to what you're printing. You can use this on the block prints, you can use it, obviously, on the Plexi in the way that we did it, and you can go directly onto the painting. This is onto screen printed material here.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, you just can totally layer.

Amy Torgeson: Right.

Nicholas Wilton: Wow.

Amy Torgeson: If you're working in oil-

Nicholas Wilton: That's beautiful.

Amy Torgeson: -there's this Caligo Safe Wash Relief Ink, so then you would just want to change your ink depending on if you're working in oil or acrylic.

Nicholas Wilton: But doesn't oil stick to acrylic?

Amy Torgeson: You mean if you're doing oil on top?

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah.

Amy Torgeson: Yes, you could ... So if your foundation was acrylic?

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, you could use the oil on top of it?

Amy Torgeson: Yes, yes.

Nicholas Wilton: I see.

Amy Torgeson: I guess if you had an oil painting going already and you wanted to integrate into it.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, yeah, right, right. Do you have to clean this up with solvents?

Amy Torgeson: Just soap and water.

Nicholas Wilton: So this is an oil-based ... This brand, this Caligo Safe Relief Ink?

Amy Torgeson: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, it's oil-based and washable.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. They're coming out with all these new products that are oil-based but clean up really easily.

Nicholas Wilton: This is great. Now, is this toxic for your hands and stuff? Do you use gloves?

Amy Torgeson: I don't use gloves, but I don't use it as much because I don't need that option.

Nicholas Wilton: And it doesn't really have a smell, right?

Amy Torgeson: A little bit. Just a little bit, but not too bad. A lot of block printers like to use this. They like the look of that kind of ... The way the ink rolls on.

The water-based ink, you get a little more variation, and I actually prefer that, so it just depends on what you're looking for.

Nicholas Wilton: And you mix this color up?

Amy Torgeson: Yes, I mix this color.

Nicholas Wilton: With no water? You just want to keep it as thick as possible?

Amy Torgeson: Sometimes I'll add water if I want a little more transparency, and with the screen printing you can also add a transparent base to give it a little more transparency. You can also take a paintbrush and, when I'm using the wooden blocks, I would either use a foam roller with the screen printing ink ... Let's say I'm working on fabric and I don't want to use the water-based ink ... Or you can take a paintbrush and paint it on. It's just going to give you a different texture.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, this makes it perfectly even.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. If we look here, this is painted on a block. It just gives you a different texture. So then we can talk about screen printing. Let me grab this.

Nicholas Wilton: Should I move this?

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, you can move that. With screen printing, you can either burn your own screens and you can get really sophisticated and use photographic images and things, or you can do something really low-tech where you're just using shelf paper and you're taking an X-Acto knife and stenciling out the shape you want, and then rolling the shelf paper on here and then what is open where you've carved with the X-Acto knife is what will print.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, so this red is the areas ... The screen has been filled. The screen is just millions of holes, and the red has just clogged up all the holes, so you put paint on this, it won't go through the red part, but it goes through to these other areas.

Amy Torgeson: Yes. And for this particular screen, I used some products from the art store, really easy to get, and what you're doing is with this screen filler, you're taking a squeegee and you're ... On the front side, you're putting the screen filler on so it's all red, letting it dry, then you're going back the next day and you're painting on your image with this drawing fluid, letting that dry, and then you rinse it and just by rinsing it in water this goes away-

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, you're kidding.

Amy Torgeson: -and leaves you-

Nicholas Wilton: So it's not a photographic process at all.

Amy Torgeson: It can be, but this is a way to do it very easily.

Nicholas Wilton: Is this new, this process?

Amy Torgeson: I don't know how long. But if I just want ... Because I can be kind of impatient. If I just want to do something and not worry about burning a screen, and also, this gives you-

Nicholas Wilton: How long does this take to dry, this stuff?

Amy Torgeson: A day.

Nicholas Wilton: And it's goop, mud, and then it's on there, and then this will dissolve it wherever it's put on it later? So you could come in and you could just be painting on it with that?

Amy Torgeson: Yes.

Nicholas Wilton: Or take string and lay it on there.

Amy Torgeson: I'm not sure how the string-

Nicholas Wilton: Or some way of-

Amy Torgeson: The string wouldn't work with this.

Nicholas Wilton: You could print on this stuff.

Amy Torgeson: Yes.

Nicholas Wilton: A pattern. You could take wrapping paper or shelf liner paper and make a pattern on it of this, and then what, you wait half an hour and it just dissolves it?

Amy Torgeson: I would say you need to let this dry. I would give it a day. It's probably shorter, and I have dried-

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, it has to dry.

Amy Torgeson: It has to dry.

Nicholas Wilton: And then you just take it all under the-

Amy Torgeson: Then you rinse it, yeah. And when you rinse it this comes off and leaves your marks. So with this, you can't get really precise.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, it's a little-

Amy Torgeson: It's a little chunky and you're just using a paintbrush. Your most immediate, low-tech version is using the shelf paper, and you're using an X-Acto and you're stenciling out-

Nicholas Wilton: You're cutting holes in it and just running over it.

Amy Torgeson: -and then sticking it on. This is your next step, which you can get these products really easily and you paint on the image that you want.

Nicholas Wilton: When you say the shelf paper, are you saying you glue the paper on here with a hole in it?

Amy Torgeson: You know, I get the shelf paper that has the sticky stuff to it.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, so you have a blank screen, you carve up the shelf paper which is sticky on the back, and then you lay it on here and then you've got an opening and a closed thing and you can just screen on it. Oh, I [crosstalk 00:21:22]

Amy Torgeson: Now, you can't keep it ... Once you're done printing and you clean your screen, you have to put your shelf paper in the garbage. It's not going to be something you can go back to over and over again.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, I see. But you can reuse the screen again and again and again.

Amy Torgeson: Yes. Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: How much is a screen like this? You just order these ... This is from Blick.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, that's probably $25 or something like that.

Nicholas Wilton: And you can use it over and over and over again?

Amy Torgeson: Yes. Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: Can you ever get out this red stuff?

Amy Torgeson: I've been less successful with that with these products.

Nicholas Wilton: With the Speedball products?

Amy Torgeson: Yes. In theory you can, and there are products to remove the image, but I have not been very successful. If you choose to burn a screen ... This one I had burned for me, but I've done plenty-

Nicholas Wilton: When you say "burn," are they using light in a light-sensitive-

Amy Torgeson: Yes, they're using ... I don't know exactly what it's called.

Nicholas Wilton: Photo emulsion?

Amy Torgeson: They're using photo emulsion and then they're using a unit, a light unit, to expose the screen, exactly.

Nicholas Wilton: And it gets it more accurate.

Amy Torgeson: Mm-hmm (affirmative), much more accurate.

Nicholas Wilton: So the eight is clear. That's where the [crosstalk 00:22:28]

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, with the exception of these markings right here. And if you wanted to reclaim this screen, you can ... There's a product that you would spray on here, and then with a high-pressure hose you could get rid of this image.

Nicholas Wilton: Wow. Wow. And is it silk?

Amy Torgeson: I don't know if they use silk now. It's a good question, because it's more common to call it a screen print.

Nicholas Wilton: And there's different weaves, right?

Amy Torgeson: Yes.

Nicholas Wilton: Different degrees, how many holes per square inch.

Amy Torgeson: This one ... What's this one? Here we go. What does it say? This says mesh 250.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, 250.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, so the more detailed the image, the higher mesh count. If I had a shape that was just an open shape-

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, very simple. Wow, look at all this.

Amy Torgeson: -then I'd probably go with a lower ... This is a 160. Because the tighter the weave, the harder it is for the ink to get through, so I've got this big,

open shape here and so the weave is a little bit bigger so the ink can cover that whole space.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, so this says mesh count 160.

Amy Torgeson: And this is one I burned myself. It doesn't look as good as the one that ... And you would just tape off your sides here.

Nicholas Wilton: Why wouldn't you put this purple stuff all the way to the end?

Amy Torgeson: I just didn't have the right tool to go all the way to the end, and also the frame prohibits you from using a tool that ... It has to be with inside this mesh or you won't be able to get close enough when you're rolling it on.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, yeah. Okay. What's so cool is you just have this forever more, and you can cover up parts of this and print, right?

Amy Torgeson: Yes, yes. Often I'll just tape off ... Let's say I only want this section to print, then I could tape off this entire area and only print this.

Nicholas Wilton: Wow.

Amy Torgeson: You know, you use these squeegees to dab your ink and then run your squeegee. But let's say you just want a little section. Then you can use-

Nicholas Wilton: [crosstalk 00:24:41] tape like this, even?

Amy Torgeson: Yep, exactly. You could just use a credit card and just do a little bit.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, and just do one area, yeah.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, little area. Yeah. I can print ... Do you want me to print this?

Nicholas Wilton: Sure, let's see how you do that. That's cool. You find that it's just a lot of setting up and ... You want to make an eight, but I could have taken out a paintbrush and made an eight, but-

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, there's definitely more setup.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, yeah. So you have different tables. You have three of these tables?

Amy Torgeson: I wish. I don't. But then I do think about, okay, so if I'm going to print this eight, how many ways can I print it and on how many surfaces?

Nicholas Wilton: Right, right. Make a whole bunch of ... Batch it.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, or I might say, "I only want part of this, so I'm going to tape this off, print this top shape in as many places as I need it, then peel away the tape, give myself a little bit more ..." And if you start with the lighter color, then you don't have to wash out your screen each time because you can just add ... Pull the ink through till it's almost gone, then put in a darker color.

Nicholas Wilton: And because it was lighter, it gets easy to cover up.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: I see.

Amy Torgeson: So, let's see. Here's my ink.

Nicholas Wilton: This is all from that little stamp over there?

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, so-

Nicholas Wilton: And you found that in a flea market or something, right?

Amy Torgeson: This particular one I don't remember, but Etsy, eBay, people come to Open Studios and say, "I have them in my garage, do you want some?"

Nicholas Wilton: These are old typographic ... This was how all the posters were made.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, exactly.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, there's tons of them around.

Amy Torgeson: At one point, I knew, okay, I love this shape, but how am I going to get it bigger?

Nicholas Wilton: Right, right.

Amy Torgeson: So I printed it onto a piece of paper, then scanned it, enlarged it, and then had this burned.

Nicholas Wilton: So you scan it and then you enlarge it on a computer, and then you can send a digital file to one of these companies?

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: I see. So people could have this ... This could be made in a city and they could be 100 miles away and they just receive the file and then they send this to you in the mail.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: Very cool.

Amy Torgeson: You can also, if you're not feeling very tech-savvy, if you can just scan it, oftentimes they can help you make it the size that you need it, or make it very black-and-white, like if you've got any grays that you need to get rid of.

Nicholas Wilton: I see. Wow.

Amy Torgeson: This is actually a little bit thick.

Nicholas Wilton: That's good. That's your water?

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. Let me just add a little bit of water.

Nicholas Wilton: Where'd you get this?

Amy Torgeson: I think that was one of my kids' toy hair things or something. This is still a little thick, so ...

Nicholas Wilton: Now, you couldn't go ... This is the oil-based stuff, right?

Amy Torgeson: No, this is acrylic.

Nicholas Wilton: No, no, this is the water.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: But could you take out Liquitex, like our normal paint, and use, or is there something special about this roller ink? It looks a little different.

Amy Torgeson: I think there is something special, because the acrylic doesn't ... You can, I think you can print with acrylic. I think it's going to be something you'd have to stay on top of in terms of it drying in your screen too soon.

Nicholas Wilton: I think this is finer, yeah.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, but it's just different enough that people don't print with it on a regular basis. So you want it to be a little bit more fluid.

Nicholas Wilton: So it runs off your spoon.

Amy Torgeson: Okay, this is fine. Let's see where my paper is. Now, if you were being really precise and registering, you would set up ...

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, clear the decks and-

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, you would clear, but-

Nicholas Wilton: And you have a canvas on ... Would it be better on a table, or do you like the-

Amy Torgeson: I like a little bit of cushion behind, but you can do it directly on a table.

Nicholas Wilton: Why do you like the cushion behind?

Amy Torgeson: I don't know. I think I got in the habit with these. Because these are so rigid, you cannot print on just a super-hard surface like a table. You need a little bit of give.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, this fills in. Yeah, and this paper feels soft and carpeting-like.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, so this is just canvas on a table, but sometimes I'll put cotton batting underneath, if I want even more cushion.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, wow. Wow, okay. Because this does influence the texture of everything you're printing. Your table has canvas on it.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. If you're needing to be really precise with your placement, then you would have to do the registration, but I'm often just freewheeling it. Your ink up here, and then you can basically flood the screen just to get it wet.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, I see, so you're not ... Okay. You're not printing yet, you're just doing it-

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, and you want to do some test prints. I used to test print on newsprint, and then I decided, I'm going to test print on actually really nice paper, because then that becomes collage material. So rather than do my test prints on paper that I wouldn't use-

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, right. You're making. You're always making something you can use.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. I have no idea how it will be used, but I might as well print it on nice paper.

Nicholas Wilton: If you do it on nice paper and you like the first one, you're done. Or you have another variation.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, you have something. Right. Now, because this paper we're using is so lightweight, we're not going to really need to go over it very often or very many times, so you use both hands and press down, get the-

Nicholas Wilton: Wow, you're really [crosstalk 00:30:23]

Amy Torgeson: -surface of the table, and then pull back.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, my god.

Amy Torgeson: In theory, that's probably enough on this paper, but I'm going to turn it around and go back and then pull the paper down because this is so lightweight. And then you would flood your screen again so that it stays ... I'm not very good at this. I often ... It's just so it stays wet, so if you're continuing to print ... You just don't want it to dry.

Nicholas Wilton: I see, because ... Yeah. I see. God, it's so beautiful, just the edge of it and the weight. There's a lot of ink on there. A lot of ink. Heavy.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, there is. Yeah. And then you can ... I often use water. If you want to have a more transparent look you're going to use less ink, more water, but you wouldn't necessarily use more ink for a more opaque surface.

Nicholas Wilton: Right. It's plenty opaque. Absolutely.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: Is that what you're doing here? Are those your collage papers glued in?

Amy Torgeson: No, this is just printing directly onto the linen, so I'm taping off in a bunch of places. There's screen printing, block printing. This is painted-on acrylic paint. Rolling just with the brayers.

Nicholas Wilton: And this writing? [crosstalk 00:31:52] used it in a few places, yeah.

Amy Torgeson: That's a block print, so that's just stamping, yeah. This is screen printing here.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, I can see that. Yeah, yeah.

Amy Torgeson: You get a little bit more of the layering.

Nicholas Wilton: Wow.

Amy Torgeson: And then this is collage, so these are the leftover bits.

Nicholas Wilton: Right, so that's where we're going now, right?

Amy Torgeson: Yes.

Nicholas Wilton: Okay.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, let me just move this here.

Nicholas Wilton: That screen's clogged. Should we wash that?

Amy Torgeson: I should wash it after we're done talking, yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: Okay, all right. Keep moving.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: This is beautiful, by the way. What is this?

Amy Torgeson: Thank you. You can print on paper or you can print on canvas, linen-

Nicholas Wilton: That's what's so great.

Amy Torgeson: -all kinds of different surfaces. For the fabric, you would use the screen printing ink. Whether it's block printing or screen printing, you'd end up using the screen printing ink. You start a project, but you end up with all of these scraps or materials or things that don't work.

Nicholas Wilton: Wow.

Amy Torgeson: In this case, there's some cyanotype printing, and-

Nicholas Wilton: What's cyanotype printing?

Amy Torgeson: That is basically sun printing, where you're treating the surface with a photographic solution.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, yeah, and then you expose it to the sun and where you've revealed parts of it it wears down.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, and these were screen printed scraps that then I put the photo solution on, and this I think is manzanita leaves or something.

Nicholas Wilton: God.

Amy Torgeson: I never know where this is going to go. This is block printed here. This is screen printed. You can see how this sits more on top.

Nicholas Wilton: Yes, there's a lot more paint.

Amy Torgeson: As opposed to the block printing.

Nicholas Wilton: Right, right. So when you're working, you'll just come and grab little pieces and glue them in and see what-

Amy Torgeson: Yeah.

Nicholas Wilton: This is all just generated from the work you're just doing?

Amy Torgeson: Yeah. Then I end up with a bunch of different scraps, so then it becomes ... And I guess it's more freeing when you're working knowing that if what you're doing on paper doesn't work there's another life to it.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, so you'll do stuff on the paper, but then you'll put it on fabric too just to have?

Amy Torgeson: That's how I started working more with the screen printing ink, because if I had one screen that was inked up and I was moving from paper to fabric, I thought, "Well, I'll just stick with the screen printing ink, because it can go to both surfaces."

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, yeah, right.

Amy Torgeson: I didn't want to have one set of colors for paper and one set of colors for fabric, so it's all permanent ink, and then I'm going to get out the sewing machine and do a little bit of sewing here. But these are new. I'm just-

Nicholas Wilton: Would you glue these on?

Amy Torgeson: I could. My vision for these is that they would be standalone, but-

Nicholas Wilton: Sewn together [crosstalk 00:34:50]

Amy Torgeson: Sewn together, yeah. But in other collages, I've definitely glued them to paper.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, yeah. And then things like this, this is all ... You've just got a whole bunch of holes in things?

Amy Torgeson: These were scrap screen prints that didn't work, and I have a hole punch and I've started making all of these.

Nicholas Wilton: Oh, my god.

Amy Torgeson: What's fun is that this becomes another exercise in collage. You look for the little gems.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, look at that little piece.

Amy Torgeson: Right? I don't know quite yet what I'm doing. I have designed some cards with these already that I'm going to put together, and then I figure there's probably a role for these somewhere, I just don't know what yet.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, so you're just generating materials to make art with, and it's almost like you have too much.

Amy Torgeson: I know. I think-

Nicholas Wilton: One painting ... When I make a painting, there's a painting at the end, and there's paper towels everywhere, but with you, you probably have more material than the actual finished object.

Amy Torgeson: Yes, and I think that's what is interesting to me. When you have this leftover ink, that's how it's all tied together.

Nicholas Wilton: That's the invitation, yeah. Like, "What are you going to do with me?" So you're experimenting. You're always experimenting.

Amy Torgeson: And with this screen, before I rinse it out, I'll run water on it and then print it again so I just get a base of a very transparent eight.

Nicholas Wilton: Like a washy eight.

Amy Torgeson: Yes. I don't know what I'll do with it, but there's something about the connectivity of the materials and the process that is really intriguing to me, and it's just the layering. And these are all very low-tech printing methods.

Nicholas Wilton: Totally, totally low-tech.

Amy Torgeson: But very accessible, and there's something appealing about that, I think.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah, and I love how it just generates ... You almost could be a center for artists could come and then just get pieces.

Amy Torgeson: Get materials, exactly.

Nicholas Wilton: Yeah. I think there's an aspect of play to this, and wonder, because you don't know what you're going to get, and drawing things from other things, and that's probably the best part of art-making. You can let go of your trying to make something and just enjoy the process of it.

Amy Torgeson: Yeah, when I think back to being a kid, one of the most satisfying things was just simply cutting paper. Over and over and over again I would cut different shapes. So I think there's something about that repetition and the very accessible materials that is very playful and free to do.

Nicholas Wilton: Thank you so much.

Amy Torgeson: Thank you.

Nicholas Wilton: I think we covered many things, and my head's spinning. Thank you, that's great.

Amy Torgeson: Thank you.