

Frisket

I have a love hate relationship with frisket. Well truth to tell I have a 'well if I have to' HATE relationship with frisket.

Liquid frisket gum or masking fluid: Water-soluble when wet, waterproof when dry.

Advantages: When applied to absorbent surfaces liquid frisket repels moisture and prevents watercolors, gouache, inks or acrylics from being absorbed into the paper. It can be applied either with a brush, pen nib, or frisket applicator. After the painted surface is completely dried the frisket can be peeled off the paper surface leaving the area completely unstained by the paint.

Disadvantages: When wet liquid frisket has a VERY strong smell of ammonia, and should be used only in a well-ventilated area. Some come with a coloring added this can stain the paper rather badly if applied too wet. It takes practice to control the frisket especially when delicate areas such as thin lines or details are being masked out. Liquid frisket MUST be completely dry before any paint is added. Be certain to use the liquid frisket straight from the bottle, if diluted with water frisket will be absorbed into the top surface of the paper. When it is time to lift the dried frisket it will take a layer of paper with it, ruining any chance of maintaining a paintable surface.

My preference has been to use Sennelier liquid drawing gum, but it is not always easy to find. It has the least amount of 'aroma' of the many I have tested. It is turquoise in color, but when fresh it does not appear to stain the paper, BUT when the bottle ages the staining becomes a problem.

I have also used The Masking Fluid made by Masquepen with little success. They do make squeeze bottle applicator with two nib sizes, which are very good for detailed application, much, much easier to use and clean than any other application method.

No matter the make of liquid frisket I only use the squeeze bottle method of application. I can maintain a lot more control.

Masking frisket: Frisket film is a transparent masking film, which is compatible with almost any surface. The backing sheet peels easily allowing easy application, the film lifts easily from the paper surface and leaves no residue. I use the low tack version to be sure it will not damage the paper tooth when lifted.

Advantages: Masking film covers a large area with one sheet, much more efficient than applying liquid frisket to these areas. If carefully handled, avoiding stretching or distortion of the shape, the stencil can be carefully placed back on its backing paper ready to be reused.

Disadvantages: VERY careful attention needs to be taken when cutting the 'stencil' shape to preserve the actual shape of the original image.

The edges of the frisket do not adhere to the paper surface well enough to prevent seepage of wet media. To resolve this, the surrounding color can be sprayed on, or applied with a dryer rather than a wet brush. OR the 'stencil' can be cut fractionally smaller than the desired size, placed on the paper surface, and a thin line of liquid frisket is added to 'seal' the edges, if carefully done this can work very efficiently.

Now I have a disaster story.

I am working on a large painting of 5 chicken backsides, before having judgment about my choice of subjects wait till it is finished – it is rather wonderful though I say so myself!

Anyway it had taken me about 20 hours to transfer and redraw these creatures. I had decided to put in a background color, but I knew I needed to preserve the white paper. I bought fresh new bottle of masking frisket – but could not find the Sennelier locally so bought the Masquepen fluid.

I carefully masked out the large areas with frisket film, and used the liquid frisket to 'seal' the film edges and mask out smaller areas. I made sure the liquid frisket was completely dry before applying the paint. Then waited overnight to be assured the paint was completely dry before lifting the film and frisket.

This was when I had a heart attack.

The liquid frisket not only lifted but it took paper with it. Sometimes a number of layers, I was working as usual on 300lb HP paper, other times it just caused the surface to bubble. It was as if the liquid had too much rubber cement it is and had adhered WAY too well to the paper surface.

The result was a completely ruined drawing.

So I began again, this time it will NOT have a painted background, if I decided it needs one I will paint around the edges and not take the 'EASY' route.

So you can see I still have this HATE for frisket. But I do know there are moments when it works, and I know many people use it very successfully.

I have begun some testing; I want to see if this was an anomaly or if Masquepen has changed their formula. Sadly I got the same results – sometimes, but not all the time. I am using the same paper, the only change was the new bottle. I am going to contact the manufacturer and see what they have to say.