

MASKING FLUID AND THE RESIST PEN

From my early beginnings as an artist I have been intrigued by finding unusual and exciting ways to explore the use of line in the painting process. I have used various means and tools along the way, including latex resist or masking fluid.

Masking fluid is available in small bottles or jars and is usually applied using an old brush protected with a fine layer of soap. Unlike other methods of creating line, masking fluid creates line by “saving” the white of the paper rather than adding color to an already existing surface. My early attempts at creating line with masking fluid were quite frustrating and involved everything from sticks, toothpicks, rubber tips, brushes and an implement familiar to the calligraphy industry, the “dip pen.” While each resulted in some modicum of success, the process was less than ideal and quite time intensive.

A few years into my exploration, a product came out that saved my sanity and changed the way I would work with line forever. A California company, Fineline, created what is now known as the Resist Pen. It's composed of a plastic reservoir containing latex masking fluid along with a cap and wire closure system that maintains an air tight seal to prevent the resist from drying out in the bottle. It's available with either an 18- or 20-gauge stainless steel applicator tip, allowing for the precise application of a variety of line widths.

Once you become comfortable with the Resist Pen, making lines with it is effortless and efficient. While rubber cement pick-up tools can be used for removal, the Resist Pen's fine lines can be easily removed by simply rubbing a finger over the masked area. Because I have used this tool from its inception, I have developed some useful guidelines that I call, The Commandments of Masking Fluid. Most of these guidelines can be applied to both the Resist Pen and to masking fluid in general.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF MASKING FLUID

Thou Shalt Not...

- Shake the bottle (gently tip back and forth)
- Leave the bottle open or leave the top off the Resist Pen
- Use on wet or damp paper
- Paint over mask until completely dry
- Leave on paper a loooooong time
- Leave masked paper in the hot sun or expose to a hot hair dryer
- Thin with water
- Correct mistakes while mask is wet
- Expect exact perfect results, especially when first using the Resist Pen

Thou Shalt...

- Start the Resist Pen on a paper towel or other scrap paper before applying to the painting
- Store the capped Resist Pen laying on its side or upside down
- Clean off the rod insert of the Resist Pen after each use and before inserting back into the stainless steel applicator tip



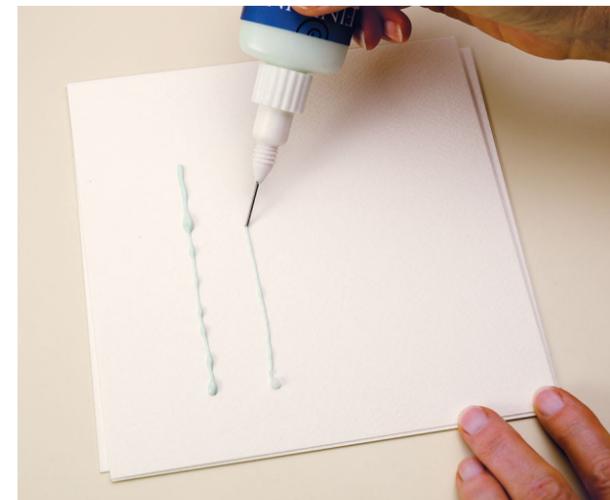
THE RESIST PEN

The Resist Pen by Fineline offers a unique cap and wire system that prevents clogging and evaporation as well as provides for precise placement of thin lines of masking fluid. The pen comes in two different tip sizes. For general use, choose the standard (18-gauge) tip.



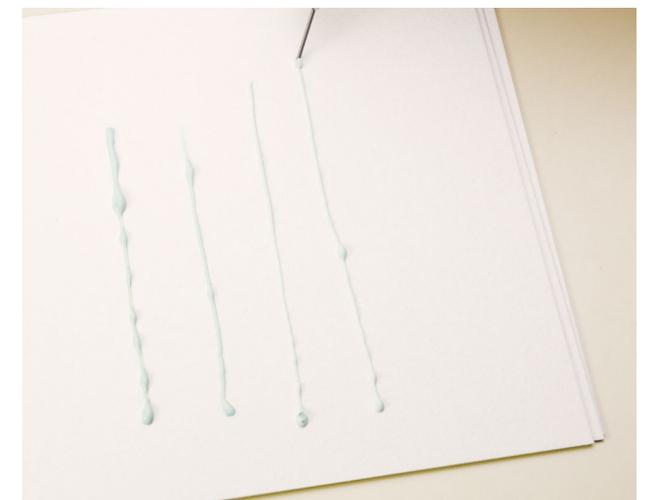
VARY THE LINE QUALITY

You can adjust the quality, thickness and smoothness of the line by varying the angle of the pen, the speed of application and the amount of pressure on the bottle. Moving the pen slowly over the paper surface at a rather low angle produces an irregular and bumpy line. Be patient when you start using the Resist Pen as line consistency will come with practice.



CHANGE THE ANGLE

To produce a smoother line, increase the angle of the pen to the paper while keeping the applicator tip on the surface of the paper. You will obtain a more even line if you resist the temptation to squeeze the applicator bottle as you draw the line. A gentle squeeze may be required at the start. Once the masking fluid is flowing, gravity and capillary action will draw the liquid onto your surface.



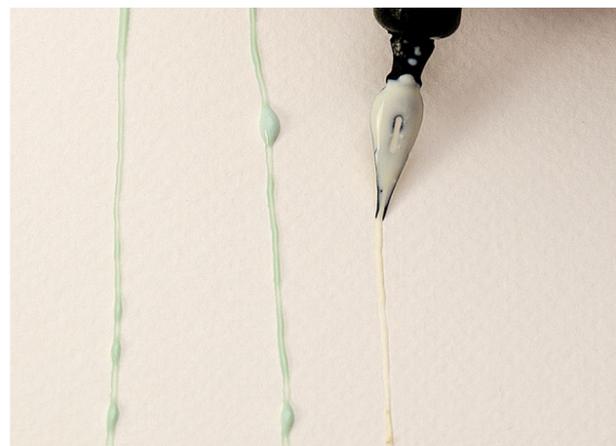
MOVE THE PEN QUICKLY

Another way to ensure an even line is to move the Resist Pen at a faster pace. Both lines on the right were created by moving the Resist Pen more quickly than those on the left. One was made with the pen at a low angle while the line just being completed was created by holding the pen at a higher angle.



USE THE DIP PEN FOR PRECISE LINES

Transfer some of your masking fluid into a small container, then dip the nib into the masking fluid and fill the pen's reservoir with masking fluid—it must be thin. A new jar of masking fluid is usually the right consistency. Buy the smallest jar you think you will need as the masking fluid will begin to thicken within a short period of time after opening the jar. Different brands of masking fluid can be diluted with water or ammonia, but this must be done before the fluid begins to congeal.



APPLY DIP PEN TO PAPER

Place the dip pen loaded with masking fluid on your paper, and apply pressure as you begin to draw the line. The line will be thin, and you will only be able to get a few inches of a line before you have to dip the pen once again into the masking fluid. The reservoir must be cleaned every few strokes, or the masking fluid will build up and restrict the flow onto the paper. (Do not dip your brushes in the water used to clean the mask off the dip pen.)



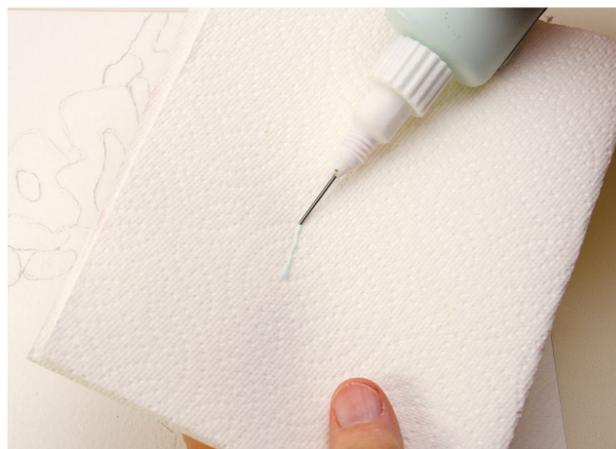
ALLOW MASK TO DRY

Once the mask is applied, allow it to completely dry before applying water or paint to the paper surface. To confirm that the mask is dry, lightly touch a finger to one of the masked areas. If no mask is transferred to your finger, you can proceed with the painting. Avoid the temptation to speed up the drying process by using a blow dryer or by placing the painting in the hot sun. The masking fluid may become gummy and difficult to remove.



APPLY MASK FREEHAND

Live on the wild side and try applying the masking fluid freehand. This will often produce a more dynamic design and allow your intuitive design sense to emerge. I'm always amazed how differently we each make lines; it's almost as distinctive as our signature. Once the mask is dry, if you're not happy with the results, remove all or part of the design and start again.



TEST FLOW BEFORE USE

Before you begin using the masking pen always test its flow on a piece of paper towel or scrap paper. One of the big advantages of the Resist Pen is that the fluid in it will not thicken as quickly as other masking fluids, but always test its viscosity before starting on your painting surface.



MASK OVER DRAWN LINES

If you have a drawing, place the tip of the Resist Pen on your paper and start to follow your lines. Once you are comfortable with using the pen, covering the complete design can be accomplished in a very short time.



REMOVE MASKING FLUID

After you have painted over your masked lines, allow the paint to completely dry before removing the masking fluid. A rubber cement pick-up is useful when removing large quantities of masking fluid, but small areas of thin masked lines are easily removed by rubbing your finger over the surface of the paper and rolling the mask free.



TINT WHITE LINES

Once the mask is removed, you can leave the lines white or use thin paint and a small brush to drop in color. If you paint the line with clear water and then touch the wet line with a brush loaded with paint, the color will flow in a very organic and natural way.

GOT A CLOG?

If your masking fluid is not flowing easily from the applicator, make sure that the dispensing rod is not clogged or that your fluid has not become thickened with age.

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