

Test Three: Caligo Relief Inks

Caligo relief is much easier to work with than Caligo intaglio. It is stickier than Hawthorne but less runny than Akua. Ultimately, it rolled up smoothly and printed crisply. As far as handling of the ink, I have two main concerns. First, though these were freshly opened inks, a lot of skin and detritus came out of the jar. The inks are covered with wax paper, but because of their consistency, they seem to easily well up and around the covering. Secondly, they smelled distinctly more like oil than the Hawthorne inks, and after many hours of working with them, the smell began to bother me. I was also concerned by warnings on the label that a cobalt allergen was contained in the formula (do more research on this).

I printed in a similar mid-tone gray as the other inks for comparison, as well as some transparent hues and opaque white. As stated, the gray was crisp and comparable to Hawthorne as far as final results. Notably, the ink required a few more firm passes with the roller in order to properly coat the letters (perhaps having to do with its sticky consistency?). Between printing, I blotted with dry shop towels and cleaned with EP-67, which did not clean the letters entirely, though the transparent hues wiped up most easily. I found this to be the case in final clean up as well. After testing opaque white (to see how an un-modified ink without transparency in it would behave), I remembered reading that Pomegranate Press does not use Caligo white because it is impossible to clean up. True! I had to soak q-tips in soap and water and then work at each letter individually, immediately blotting up the water with a dry shop towel. For the last run before clean-up, I inked half my type in transparent colors and half in white. I ran newsprint through twice to blot up most of the ink, then blotted with a dry shop towel, wiped with EP-67, and dried the type. At that point, the letters inked only with transparent colors were perfectly clean, while I had to proceed to work at the white letters with the above painstaking process.

Clean-up of the palette and tools was a little smoother, though again the white proved to be stubborn. After scraping up excess ink, Caligo recommends wiping as much ink as possible from the palette with a dry rag. This proved impossible due to the sticky consistency of the ink. Instead, I sprayed the surface with soapy water, which broke down the ink immediately. It was then easy to wipe up with a dry paper towel. I wiped down all surfaces with EP-67 to remove any soap residue. To clean the rollers, after having sprayed down the palette with soapy water, I rolled the rollers across this surface a few times, which effectively broke down the ink (except, again, the white). For stubborn ink, I applied

dish soap directly to the roller and rubbed at it with a fresh sponge. If water touches a surface before soap, it is far more difficult to remove the ink, a phenomenon which makes cleaning a batch of palette knives, for instance, rather difficult, as clean up is best done at a sink, and the sponge inevitably becomes more and more damp. I found myself using excessive amounts of dish soap to clean the palette knives and rollers. It was also very important to thoroughly dry these tools after clean-up.

Overall, given the visual results, it is worth trying Caligo with the inking system. It is disconcerting that the white can not be used, at least not on its own (I used quite a bit of white in mixing colors, which did not seem to affect clean up). Though the inks were not out quite as long as the Hawthorne inks, there was no evidence of drying or skin forming.