B&H Colour Change

212 St. Ann's Hill
London
SW18 2RU

T: +44 (0) 8454 584121
F: +44 (0) 8454 584131
E: team@colourchange.com
W: www.colourchange.com

THERMOCHROMIC WATER-BASED FLEXOGRAPHIC INK

DESCRIPTION

Thermochromic flexographic inks, in printed form, are coloured below a specific temperature, and change to colourless or to another, lighter colour as they are heated through a defined temperature range. These inks are available in various colours and activation temperatures. Standard activation temperatures are 15, 25 and 43° C (59, 77 and 109°F). Other activation temperatures are also available, from -5° C to 60°C. The activation temperature is defined as the temperature above which the ink has completely changed to its final clear or light colour end point. The colour starts to fade at approximately 4° C below the activation temperature and will be in between colours within the activation temperature range. The colour change is "reversible," i.e., the original colour will be restored upon cooling. Flexographic ink is ideal for document security, promotional items, temperature indicating labels, packaging, games, novelties, etc.

TYPICAL PROPERTIES

Viscosity (Zahn 2)	35-55 sec
pH (initial)	7.3-7.4
Density (Approx.)	1.02 kg./ ltr
Appearance	Liquid
Percent Solids (Approx.)	31% +/-
Percent Volatiles (Approx.)	<5%

STORAGE AND HANDLING

The inks have good stability when stored away from heat. Store Below 32°C. Ink must be used within three months of purchase. Storage longer than six months not recommended. Consult MSDS prior to product use.

SPECIAL CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Thermochromic flexo ink is simple to use, but it is a little different from other water-based flexo inks. The differences between our ink and regular water-based flexo inks are outlined below. The instructions below should be followed carefully to achieve optimal results. One of the main objectives in this process is to maximize the coating weight. Thermochromic ink is a light-coloured ink. The way to achieve the darkest colour is to get the highest coating weight possible. If you have your own techniques for increasing coating weight, feel free to try them as well.

- Use the smallest anilox number possible. It should be lower than 350. An anilox of below 150 is recommended where high colour is desired.
- Print only on uncoated paper or semigloss paper. This formulation is made specifically for paper, and should not be printed on plastic or coated stock without first consulting with B&H. Compatibility of ink, coating and stock must be determined prior to production runs.
- Use a hard sticky-back.
- Use rubber plates with soft durometer.
- Use very little nip pressure.
- Use a doctor blade instead of a metering roller. If the doctor blade is metallic, be sure the anilox used with the doctor blade is ceramic.
- The viscosity of the formulations varies slightly between colours and will be on the high side. This higher viscosity is by design. The results achieved using this thicker ink will be superior to lower viscosity thermochromic inks. Lower the viscosity by adding distilled water.
- The volume of the cells should be as high as possible.
- Be sure to stir the ink well before and during use. Upon extended storage, the ink may separate. This can be remedied by stirring well before use.

- Clean up with regular solvent, but DO NOT allow the unused ink to come in contact with the solvent, or anything other than distilled water. Be sure the press is dry before adding any ink to it. Remember that whatever comes in contact with the ink can have an effect on it. Solvents are therefore to be avoided.

SENSITIVITY
Thermochromic materials are sensitive to adverse environmental conditions. These are listed below, along with a description of the nature of the sensitivity, and recommendations with regards to them.

LIGHT: Most significantly, long exposure to UV and some fluorescent lights can degrade colour intensity and changing characteristics of the ink. Extreme exposure of more than several days of direct sunlight may degrade the colour of the ink, though it will probably still change colours. More than 600 hours of a strong fluorescent light may also cause a loss of colour in the thermochromic. This is true of many different pigments and dyes. In handling these materials, a good rule of thumb is to assume that they art about as sensitive to light as fluorescent pigments are.

HEAT: Extended exposure to very high temperatures, i.e., 37° C or higher, can also degrade the pigment. The effect of light exposure seems to be additive over time. However, with heat, the exposure only has an effect if a given temperature is constantly maintained for a given amount of time. For instance, if a printed piece is left in a car on a hot day, out of the sun, at a temperature of around 54° C for eight hours, one might see slight degradation of the piece. If the same piece is left in the car on a cooler day, say 37° C for the same amount of time, no degradation would be seen. This could happen for months on end before any degradation was seen, as long as the piece were returned to a cooler temperature for the other sixteen hours of the day. If the piece were left in an environment where it remained at 100° F for many days, one might then expect to see a reduction in colour. In other words, the effect is time- and temperature-dependent.

CHEMICALS: Thermochromic materials are sensitive to chemical exposure as well. Since it is very unlikely that the printed piece will come into contact with deleterious chemicals under normal conditions, this should not be of great concern. On the other hand, because of the chemical sensitivity and softness of this ink, it also has excellent anti-alteration properties.

CONCLUSION: In short, this ink should be stored in a cool, dry place, away from direct exposure to light, especially sunlight. This is true of both the printed ink and the wet ink. Ink in the can should be used within six months of receiving it. If the colour or colour reaction is compromised in a security environment, one need only to continue to verify the authenticity of the document by other means; ghost watermark, bleed through inks, etc. We predict that with proper handling, the failure rate of the ink will be less than one half of one percent, and as mentioned above, this means that one need only continue to verify authenticity and not redeem the document for cash until confirmation is established.

NOTE REGARDING HYSTERESIS: Reversible thermochromics exhibit what is referred to as “hysteresis.” In other words, if a standard “Body Temperature” ink is raised to an extreme temperature, say above 65° C (as with a curing unit), then left to cool under normal ambient conditions (18° to 24° C), the ink may not achieve its full colour, even after it reaches room temperature. Although, under normal circumstances the ink should have full colour up to 7-8 degrees below the stated activation temperature, once exposed to this kind of temperature “spike,” one may need to lower the ink’s temperature to below 10° C to gain improved behavior. ALL APPLICATIONS USING COLOUR-CHANGING INKS OF ANY KIND SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY TESTED PRIOR TO APPROVAL FOR PRODUCTION.

For further information or assistance, please contact B&H Colour Change Ltd, +44 (0) 845 458 4121