

## VEGETABLE CLEANING AGENTS - VCA - and their uses

Ad Stijnman says of VCA “ *Instead of using all kinds of equipment it is better to fight the problem at the source. Introduction of Vegetable Cleaning Agents (VCA) as cleansers for printing plates, brushes, metal, glass & plastic objects in general will 'solve' most studio related health problems, & is a true contribution to a cleaner environment.*”

VCA – vegetable cleaning agent, safer clean-up for printmakers – is now available in 1litre bottles from [www.ebotanig.com.au/vegetable-cleaning-agent-vca.html](http://www.ebotanig.com.au/vegetable-cleaning-agent-vca.html)

VCA is great for removing grounds & stop-outs such as acrylic bitumen paint read safer etching article below. VCA will clean rollers safely (always use a cream cleanser and rinse thoroughly to remove residual VCA).

See the PDF from the Warringah Printmaker’s website  
[http://www.printstudio.org.au/sa/stijnman\\_vca.pdf](http://www.printstudio.org.au/sa/stijnman_vca.pdf)

Etching aluminium using acrylic based bitumen rubber paint as a safe ground & stop-out. Safe clean up with VCA.

This acrylic bitumen rubber paint is a product used in industry as a waterproofing agent for roofs etc. As a stopout it is a preferable alternative to the turps based traditional bitumen paint. It is **not** classified as hazardous according to criteria of Worksafe Australia.

Similar acrylic waterproofing products are available in other countries. In Australia the product is marketed as Gripset bitumen rubber paint available at hardware stores.

There is no discernible odour when using the paint unlike the traditional counterpart and it is water mixable for ease of use. It can be applied as a ground (applied in several thin coats with a sponge – drying on the hotplate between each coat) and also as a stop out. Water needs to be added so that it is not too thick - where it was very thick it resisted the etching needle and where too thin it was foul bitten. A little practice will determine the best thickness.

**To remove soak in a bath of VCA - Vegetable Cleaning Agent – a safe solvent.**

Altogether acrylic bitumen paint is far more pleasant to use than traditional bitumen paint, no discernible fumes, easier to apply and dries quickly with the help of a hairdryer or a minute or two on the hotplate.



Jim Josephsen’s “Florentine Sky” – etching on aluminium using Gripset Bitumen Rubber paint as a ground and stopout and VCA to clean the plate

## Preparing the plate

Aluminium or any other metal plate can be used. Depending on the thickness and condition of the plate first sand with wet and dry sandpaper and prepare edges.

	Method
1	To degrease scrub the plate with a scouring pad, finish with a cream cleanser
2	Dry with a clean towel or a hairdryer
3	Cover the back of the plate with contact film to protect during etching
4	Keep fingers off the surface until the ground is brushed on



Ground painted on too thinly    optimal thickness    drawing with etching needle    etching as usual

## Bitumen rubber as a ground

Don't use the paint too thinly, see picture above left, a thin coat like this will foul bite. Conversely, a coat painted on too thickly may resist the etching needle. A little practice will determine the best thickness.

	Method
1	Use water to thin bitumen rubber paint down to a thin creamy consistency and brush on or apply with a sponge several light coats. Dry between coats. See second picture above for optimal thickness.
2	Dry the plate on a hotplate for 1or 2 minutes or dry with a hairdryer then apply an image with the etching needle.
3	The plate is now ready to be immersed in the etching bath.
4	After plate has been etched remove ground by soaking in a bath of VCA. Or with acetone
5	Thoroughly degrease using cream cleanser applied with a soft sponge rinse, dry.



VCA used to remove ground    stopping out    drying on hotplate    etching    further stopping out

## Bitumen rubber as a stopout

For copper, zinc or steel apply a safer aquatint before stopping out. Expect perfect results without foul biting on aluminium but make sure each application is dried thoroughly before re-immersing in the etching bath

	Method
1	Apply the paint the same as regular stopout and dry thoroughly.
2	Immerse in the etching bath to etch - stopping out to gain various tones
3	After plate has been etched remove the ground by soaking in a bath of VCA or with acetone
4	Thoroughly degrease using cream cleanser applied with a soft sponge rinse, dry.
5	Sand edges smooth, ink and print.



Stopping out

final plate ready to ink

sanding the edges smooth

the print



*Left:* notice where the ground was thickly applied it resisted the etching needle. *Right:* final print

- VCA removes the paint perfectly. After removal rinse the VCA off the plate and degrease with cream cleanser on a soft sponge.
- Keeping a small amount of the paint in a jar may be the best way to use this product - if the lid is left off the tin it will dry out.
- Gripset Betta non-toxic Bitumen Rubber paint available from hardware stores