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ORIGINAL PRINTS

All the prints are conceived and carried out by the artist working directly onto the plate from which the print will be made. The artist produces a limited number of prints (an edition), and signs and numbers them. The size of the edition and number of the individual print is indicated by a fraction, eg 4/50 (ie No. 4 in an edition of 50). Artist's Proofs are marked 'A/P' and should number no more than 10% of the print run. An Original Print is therefore an original work of art and should not be confused with mass produced photographic reproduction, which are sometimes described as prints.

An Original Print can be described as either a **relief print** or an **intaglio print**.

RELIEF PRINT

In a relief print it is the surface of the block that yields the image. After drawing an image directly onto a suitable surface - such as a wooden block, or a linoblock - the artist then cuts away all the space around it, leaving the drawn areas raised, or in 'relief'. Ink is then rolled on the surface and the image transferred onto paper either by passing the block through a press or rubbing it by hand. Since the cutaway areas do not take the ink, they appear white on the printed image. Relief prints are characterized by bold dark-light contrasts. The primary relief techniques are **woodcut**, **wood engraving**, and **linocut**.

INTAGLIO PRINT

Intaglio comes from the Italian word *intagliare*, meaning "to cut in". The image is cut into a metal plate (usually copper or zinc) using either a sharp tool (engraving) or acid (etching). The plate is then covered with ink and wiped, so that the ink remains only in the incised grooves. A dampened piece of paper is placed over the plate and run through an etching press. The paper is pushed into the grooves and ink is picked up. An easy way to tell an intaglio print is to look for the platemark - the impression of the plate on the paper.

The primary intaglio techniques are **engraving**, **drypoint**, **mezzotint**, **etching**, and **aquatint**.

Woodcut is the earliest and most enduring print technique. In a woodcut it is the raised surface containing the positive image that is printed. The background area is carved away, creating the white, nonprinting, areas.

Wood Engraving is an extremely fine form of woodcutting. Unlike the woodcut, the image is developed as an intricate pattern of white lines. Using blocks made from the end-grain of the wood, the artist can obtain great detail and tonality.

Linocut is essentially the same process as woodcut, the only difference is that linoleum is softer and easier to use. Linoleum's use as a craft material and as a means of introducing children to printmaking has caused many artists to avoid it, although excellent work has been done by Matisse and Picasso as early as 1939. Picasso was probably the first person to devise a reduction method by cutting and printing each color from one block until only the last color portion remains on the block. The reduction method is best described by its name. One block is reduced in stages to a multicolored print. The first color is sometimes printed from the whole block. Sometimes a minimal amount of the block is removed to designate the first color. The number of the edition is established before printing the first color, as there is no possibility of reprinting. After printing the first color, the block is cut a little more, re-inked with a different color and printed over the first color. The cutting will continue until an image develops. In a similar manner, MDF board is used as the base material in place of linoleum in the production of a **reduction woodcut**.

Engraving is a deceptively simple technique, requiring only a burin and a metal plate to produce a line. This intaglio technique demands great control. The plate is cut into directly using a sharp-pointed tool, a burin. The engraved line is unique, with a crisp, precise character and clean edges.

Drypoint is a method of intaglio printmaking in which the artist scratches directly on the metal plate with a sharp instrument such as an etching needle. The technique differs from etching in that it is entirely manual and does not involve the use of acid to cut the plate. It differs from engraving in that the tool scratches the design on the plate, displacing the metal rather than removing it. When the drypoint line is scratched into the metal plate the tool creates a ragged burr on either side of the line. This burr, as well as the incised line itself, holds a great deal of ink and is responsible for the characteristic feathery nature of the lines.

Mezzotint is essentially engraving in reverse. A spiked roller called a rocker is used to create a textured surface all over the plate, so that if it was inked and printed it would print in solid black. The picture is then developed in chiaroscuro with a scraper and a burnisher; the artist works from "black" to "white" by flattening (burnishing) areas so that they do not hold ink. No line drawing is employed in pure mezzotint, the result being soft without the sharp lines of an etching.

Etching makes use of a metal plate first covered with an acid-proof hard ground made of asphaltum, beeswax, rosin and solvent. Wherever the artist scratches lines or textures in the ground, the acid will "bite" with clear definition. The longer the plate is left in the acid the deeper the open lines will become, making them print heavier and increasing the darkness of the print. The ground is then removed, and the plate is inked, wiped clean and printed in exactly the same way as an engraving. It is much easier to draw quickly on the waxy ground than it is directly onto the plate and this is why etching became the preferred technique for artists such as Picasso and Matisse who wanted to match the fluidity of drawing with the aesthetic possibilities of printing.

Aquatint is a technique used to achieve tonal areas in an intaglio plate. It is a form of etching in which the plate is covered with many tiny particles of rosin (adhered to the plate by heating), which allows the acid to bite through evenly, creating areas of tone on top of the incised lines. Because of this, aquatints can often look like ink-brushed drawings or watercolours.

Lithography was invented in 1798 and was devised as a way of making posters, reaching its height in Paris in the 1890s, when artists like Bonnard and Toulouse-Lautrec used it to design posters for cabarets and revues. Lithographs were initially made on slabs of stone (usually limestone), although, in the 20th century, the heavy stones began to be replaced by sheets of zinc. The artist draws on the stone or plate using a greasy medium, such as a wax crayon. The surface is then dampened with water, which is repelled by the greasy areas, sticking only to the sections of the plate that have not been drawn on. Ink is then applied to the plate with a roller and this sticks only to the greasy sections, as the water protects the rest of the plate. The stone or plate is then covered with paper and run through the press, printing the original crayon drawing.

Screenprinting became famous in the 1960s, thanks to those Pop artists who took this commercial process (only used for printing labels and t-shirts) to make their art of consumer icons. It is essentially a stencil process. A fabric mesh (screen) is stretched over a frame, which is then placed on top of a sheet of paper. The screen is blocked out with a stencil. Most screenprints are made up of a number of layers - with each stencil allowing a different element or colour to be printed. Ink is then dragged over the screen using a squeegee, forcing its way through the un-masked areas onto the paper beneath. One of Warhol's great innovations was to cover the screen with a photosensitive material and then project a photograph on it, turning the screen into the equivalent of a film 'negative' and thus allowing him to endlessly print the images of his favourite stars.

Monotype/Monoprint is an intriguing hybrid among printmaking techniques. Monoprints are neither a print nor a painting, but a unique combination of both. It is one image (mono) painted with oil-based or water-based inks onto any surface that will transfer the image onto paper.

The two terms *monotype* and *monoprint* are often confused and need clarification. A **monoprint** is a print created through any technique (lithograph, etching, woodblock, etc.) that is altered after it has been printed. Each print is different from the other, as the artist works each etched or worked plate individually, adding color or wiping the ink differently each time a print is pulled. A **monotype** is the printing of an image from a clean, unworked surface containing no scratching, carving or drawing. The main difference is that with monotypes editions are impossible to pull.