

# PRINTMAKING ENCOUNTERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Craig Roland, 2012

*Simply put, printmaking is a process of transferring an image from one surface to another. Except for mono-printing in which an image is only made once, most printmaking processes allow for making multiple copies of an original image.*

## TYPES OF PRINTMAKING

Printmaking is classified into four basic processes: planographic, relief, intaglio, stencil. Following are brief explanations of each.

*Planographic* printing is done by applying ink or paint to a flat surface (such as stone) in such a way that it creates a design or picture. Lithographs and monoprints are examples of this process.

*Relief Printing* is done from a block in which the design is raised above the rest of the surface. This surface is made by either cutting away or building up. The upper surface is inked and then transferred to the printing paper. Wood and linoleum are popular materials for making “cutaway” relief prints. Cardboard, string and collages are examples of “build-up” reliefs. Rubbings are also classified as relief prints.



*Intaglio printing* is done from a plate in which the design is sunk below the surface. The printed image is made by scratching, engraving or etching chemically into a metal plate. Ink is then forced into the grooves and the raised surface is wiped clean. The plate and a sheet of dampened paper are run through a press with just enough pressure to force the paper into the grooves to pick up the ink. Etchings and engravings are examples of intaglio prints.

*Stencil printing* is done by squeezing ink or paint through a fine screen, parts of which have been blocked out with some type of stencil. Silk-screening is an example of stencil printing.

## ARTISTS TO STUDY

Children should look at and discuss the prints of Rembrandt van Rijn, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Paul Gauguin, Andy Warhol, Ben Shahn, Ludwig Kirchner, Kathe Kollwitz, Henri Matisse, Mary Cassatt, Albrecht Durer and other artists whom have worked with printmaking media.



A sixth-grade student made this print from a linoleum block. The inspiration came from a stuffed eagle displayed in the classroom.

## EASY PRINTMAKING PROCESSES

Printmaking refers to processes that are used to transfer an image from one surface to another surface. The following processes are simple enough to introduce at the lower elementary school level.

*Monoprints* involve making one copy (or print) of an image. The materials needed for this project are a hard, smooth, non-absorbent surface such as a sheet of glass or formica, and either opaque tempera, finger paint, or water-soluble printing ink. To begin, paint an image on the smooth surface or roll out the paint and draw into it with the wooden end of the brush. Lay a piece of paper on top of the image and rub the back with a wooden spoon or brayer. Pull the print from the surface.

*Gadget Prints* are made by using found objects as stamping devices. Simply press the object into a stamp pad or paint over the surface of the object with a thin coat of tempera paint. Then, stamp the image onto your paper. Selection of objects is limitless: try sponges (cut in different shapes), sink stoppers, kitchen items, wood scraps and so on.

*Vegetable prints* are an old tradition in elementary classrooms. Begin by cutting a number of veggies (e.g. onions) or fruits (apples or oranges, etc.) in half. Press these pieces onto clean paper to absorb the excess moisture. Next, press the pieces onto an ink pad (or place a folded paper towel, dampened and soaked with tempera in a large pie tin) and then stamp your shape onto a sheet of paper. Try alternating, repeating, and varying shapes and colors to make an interesting design. Potatoes can be easily cut with plastic knives to also add interest.

For older children, you might try relief printing using Styrofoam meat trays or linoleum blocks. *Relief Prints* are made by cutting (or drawing) into a surface leaving a raised surface design which will print in the color selected. Styrofoam is an easy and inexpensive material to work with. Begin by cutting the edge from the meat tray. Draw your design (which will remain white when printed) into the surface with a pencil. Poke the surface or create linear textures to add interest. Brush (or roll) a thin coat of tempera (or ink) over the surface. Lay a sheet of paper over the top and gently rub the back. Pull the print off the surface.



A third grader proudly shows her relief print made from a styrofoam plate.