

CMYK: SERIGRAPHY AND WOODCUT HYBRID PRINTS

Ross F. Jahnke, Department of Art
Nicholls State University

METHODS

HISTORY

A brief background in the history of printmaking will aid comprehension of methodology used to create this body of work. According to the Print Council of America:

"An original print is a work of graphic art, the general requirements of which are:

1. The artist alone has made the image in or upon the plate, stone, woodblock or other material, for the purpose of creating a work of graphic art.
2. The impression is made directly from that original material, by the artist or pursuant to his directions.
3. The finished print is approved by the artist." (Cahn Ed.)

It is important to distinguish an original print from a reproduction (poster). In a reproduction, there is a piece of artwork in another media (painting, drawing, etc.) that was photographically copied and printed. The artwork is the painting itself, not its printed reproduction, whether or not "the finished print is approved by the artist." An original print or work of graphic art is, though produced in multiples, the only complete representation of the artists intent. Each original print is a piece of artwork.

RESULTS

Like most art, these prints are part of a body of work that shares similar conceptual, formal, and technical characteristics. As mentioned earlier this body began in 2017 and is the result of interest in portraiture expressed through the gesture and texture of wood and the woodcut process. This body of work is ongoing.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion to be drawn from this artwork is that more artwork needs to be made, new color ideas need to be tried, and new ways of representing human likeness in wood need exploration. Like a research project in science, the conclusion of one print is the starting point of another, and the conclusion of a body of work, is the starting point of a new body of work.

Woodcuts or more broadly relief printing developed in China in the second century CE, shortly after the development paper in that country. Both arrived in Europe during the 12th century (Hughes & Vernon-Morris). Famously Johannes Guttenberg developed both the printing press and movable type for printing text in approximately 1440. In relief printing a block is cut with gouges or other tools to create relieved areas in its surface. Ink is applied to the block (usually with a roller) depositing it on the high areas, while the relieved areas receive no ink. When paper is placed upon the inked surface and pressed, the ink transfers to the paper (in reverse) creating the print.

Serigraphy or silkscreen-printing has its origins in stenciling, a process dating to 4000 BCE, which can be seen in, works from ancient Egypt, China and Japan (Hughes & Vernon-Morris). The process moved to the West in the late 19th century and was quickly in worldwide use by the beginning of the 20th century. The term serigraphy is used to distinguish fine art made with the silkscreen process from commercial applications of the process. (Cahn). Ink is pushed through a fine mesh onto paper using a squeegee. The image is created by selectively blocking areas of the mesh with some form of stencil. Serigraphy/silkscreen is the only printing process where the image in the matrix (screen) is not reversed in the print.

Mokuhanga is a Japanese woodcut printing process developed in the Edo Period, 1603-1868 (Yoshida &

Yuki). Often the term Ukyo-E is also used to denote the process. What is notable in relation to the author's methodology is that Mokuhanga printing uses inks that are a combination of rice paste and liquid pigment, not the oil based inks traditionally used for relief printing in the West. In this body of artwork the serigraphy ink is made of similar materials using pure papermaking pigments combined with a methylcellulose/starch paste used for bookbinding and wallpaper. Though variations of this ink have been used in the past, this specific combination of vehicle and pigment was developed by the author.

PROCESS

1. A print begins with a drawing in the sketchbook, a photograph or both. The image is re-drawn by hand onto a wooden block, preferably 1960's era plywood scavenged from remodeling projects. This vintage plywood is made from old-growth pine, which has a very tight wood grain pattern that enhances the image.
2. The block is carved, cutting away areas that are to be white, and leaving the surface unchanged where the image is to print black (see Figure 1).
3. The block is inked and printed in the traditional manner onto thin Japanese rice paper (see Figure 2). The block may be cut and printed several times until the desired result is achieved.
4. The rice paper print is scanned into the computer and scaled to +/-200%. From that an inkjet transparency is made. This transparency then transfers the image

INTRODUCTION

If a painting represented the sound of a symphony orchestra a print would be the sound of a string quartet. Each is equally complex and beautiful but one is created with fewer means compared to the other. This research poster will illustrate the creative and technical processes used to produce limited edition prints. The prints represent a combination of two established printmaking processes,

woodcut printing (also called relief printing) and serigraphy (also called silk screen printing). The technique also involves an unique ink that was developed by the artist, which is loosely based on Moku-Hanga (Japanese woodblock printing) inks, but utilized in a completely new way.

OBJECTIVES

Art for the artist is in the making itself where the finished piece is an artifact of the creative process. The creative process in the author's current work addresses several conceptual, formal and technological objectives, and a finished print represents the successful (or failed) attempt to do so.

The conceptual objective of the author was to make portraits that use the texture of wood grain and gouge marks to represent light, space, and flesh, using subjective color as a secondary enhancement, and a nod to the tradition of process-color printing.

For a decade the technological objective of these prints has been to combine the flat transparent color of serigraphy with the organic texture and gestural properties of woodcut prints. Though the earliest example of this combination of processes was made in 2002, this body of work began in earnest in 2009. Though the printing process changed somewhat in 2014, the visual results are essentially the same.

In work from 2017-present, the original intent was to print in the four color process, cyan, magenta, yellow, and black or key (CMYK), but this objective fell by the wayside as the color palette of the work quickly expanded beyond this limitation.

to a silkscreen using a light sensitive photo emulsion. Thus the woodcut print becomes a serigraph for the remainder of the printing process (see Figure 2). It also becomes the key image, or the stencil that provides the darkest color and the most detail.

5. The transparency is also used as a guide for designing the selective application of 2 to 6 additional colors that will also be printed using the serigraphic process. These stencils are not made using photo emulsion like the key image, but with a stencil cut from tracing paper (see Figures 3, 4, & 5).
6. Tracing paper stencils are adhered to the bottom of the screen using paste or white glue. Registration pins and marks align the sheets of paper with the screen so that each color falls in the correct place in relation to the others.
7. Ink is mixed using 3/4 cup (approx.) of paste with small amounts of papermaking pigment to achieve the desired color and saturation.

8. The ink is pushed through the screen onto the paper using a squeegee (Figure 6). The wet print is hung to dry and a new piece of paper placed under the screen to repeat the process until that color is printed on every sheet.

9. The first color is printed on all of the sheets of paper and allowed to dry. This is repeated for each subsequent color until the last color (the key image) is printed. (Although the key image is produced first, it is almost always printed last.)

10. Finished prints (figure 7) are torn to size, signed, titled, dated and numbered. When numbering prints, the denominator indicates the number of prints in the edition, and the numerator denotes each individual print. Prints from smaller editions are more highly prized than those from larger editions, and some collectors prefer to have print #1 of the edition, even though every print in the edition is identical. Editions in this body of work are very small typically 5 or 10 prints are produced.



Figure 1: The original plywood block



Figure 2: The digital version of the key image. This is used to make the silkscreen for printing the black color.



Figure 3: Plan for the tracing paper stencil used to print the cyan.



Figure 4: Plan for the tracing paper stencil used to print the magenta.

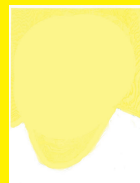


Figure 5: Plan for the tracing paper stencil used to print the yellow.

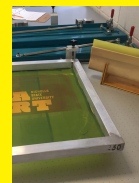


Figure 6: Screen and squeegee.



Figure 7: The finished print.

CITATIONS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Poster design by Ms. Trisha Rabalais, Associate Professor of Art, Nicholls State University

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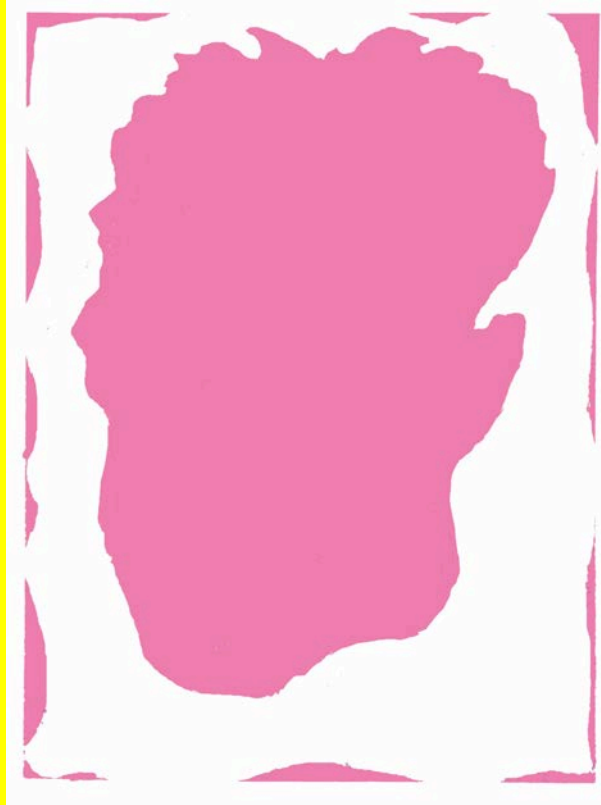
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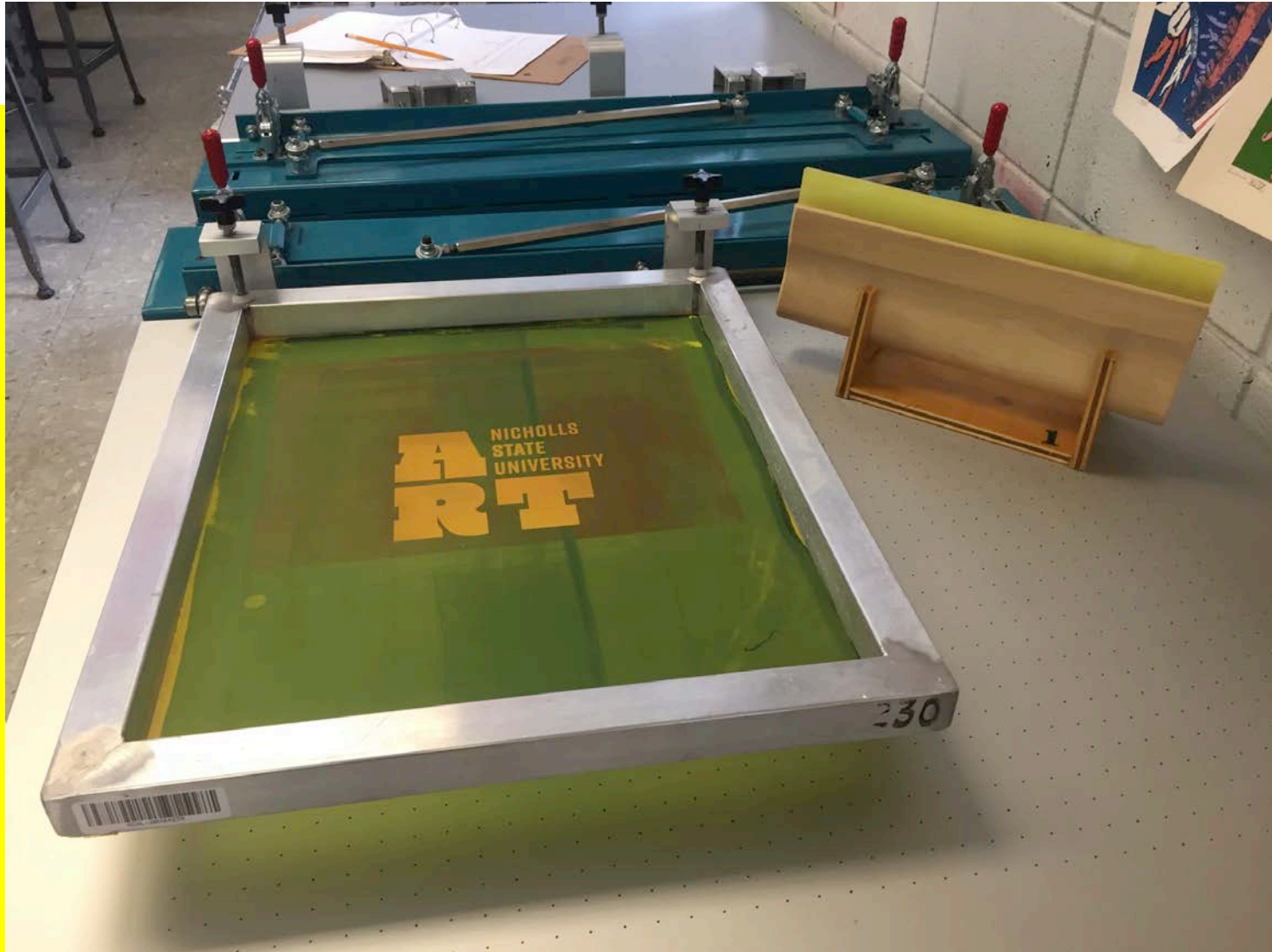
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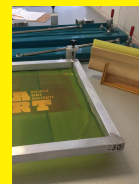


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