

Glossary of Printmaking Terms



Norman Ackroyd, [*September Sunrise – Windermere*](#), 1997, Gift of Robert A. Hiller in memory of Robert E. Doucé, 2008.0296

Aquatint

An etching technique that creates areas of tone through the use of powdered resin that is sprinkled on the etching plate prior to being bitten by the etching acid. The result is a finely textured tonal area whose darkness is determined by how long the plate is bitten by the acid.



Hendrick Goltzius, [*Demogorgon in the Cave of Eternity*](#), circa 1588, Museum purchase, Helen Foresman Spencer Art Acquisition Fund, 2011.0140

Chiaroscuro Woodcut

A form of woodcut involving several blocks in which one or more of the blocks is used to print large areas of tone. Typically, a chiaroscuro woodcut will involve a line block to indicate the outlines of the composition and tone blocks with areas carved out to create highlights by allowing the white of the paper to show through. The final effect is similar to an ink wash drawing with highlights and line drawing.



Ernst Haeckel, [Orchids \(Orchidae\)](#), 1904, Anonymous Gift, 2017.0055.01.a,b

Chromolithograph

A color lithograph usually involving a large number of lithographic stones that allow complex color separation. The term is often used to describe late 19th century color lithographs that emulate or reproduce paintings.



Gifford Reynolds Beal, [Gathering Brush \(In Central Park\)](#), circa 1930, Gift of Hal M. Davison, Class of 1949, 1998.0217

Drypoint

Similar to etching, but the lines are simply scratched into the plate manually, without the use of acid. The hallmark of a drypoint is a soft and often rather thick or bushy line somewhat like that of an ink pen on moist paper.



Heinrich Aldegrever, [*Portrait of Jan van Leyden, King of the Anabaptists at Münster*](#), 1536, Museum purchase: Letha Churchill Walker Memorial Art Fund, 2001.0021

Engraving

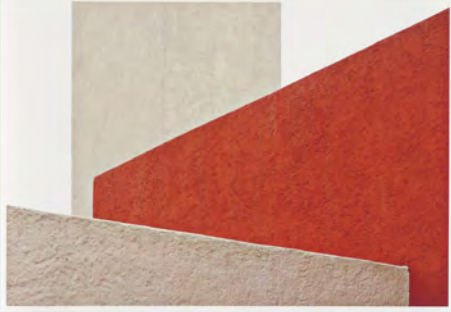
A form of intaglio (please see “intaglio” entry) in which lines are incised into a metal plate with a carving tool called a burin. The characteristics of burin engraving differ from that of etching in producing engravings. Burin engraving requires considerable force, is done from the strength of the arm and eliminates the quavering autographic qualities of etching, which is done more from the fingertips like fine drawing. The hallmarks of engraving are often elegantly swelling and tapering lines.



Robert Carston Arneson, [*Broken Brick*](#), 1975, Gift of Ronald and Marilyn Grais through Landfall Press, 1981.0023

Etching

A means of incising lines into a metal plate with acid for printing in the intaglio technique (please see “intaglio” entry). The plate is first covered with an acid resistant ground through which the artist scratches a design with a stylus or needle, revealing the bare metal below. This plate is then immersed in an acid bath that cuts the incised lines into the plate. Etched lines often betray the subtle motions of the artist's fingertips.



Martirene Alcántara, [*Legacy \(From the series Homage to Luis Barragán\)*](#), 2012, Museum of Modern Art, 372.2017

Giclée

An Iris print, the name derives from the French for “spurt.” A technology for photograph reproduction using a high-quality inkjet printer to make individual copies.



Édouard Manet, [*At the Café*](#), 1874, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, 1962.82

Gillotage

A relief process made by transferring a lithographic image to a metal plate that is then etched to produce a relief plate. The term is also used inaccurately to indicate varieties of photomechanical relief printing.



Rembrandt van Rijn, [*Three Gabled Cottages*](#), late 1800s–early 1900s, Gift in memory in Mildred Seward Pierce, 2006.0141

[Heliogravure](#)

A forerunner of photogravure in which the photographic image is projected directly onto the plate rather than transferred to it on an emulsion. The term "photogravure" is often used indiscriminately for both techniques.



Barry Andersen, [*Sheep and Standing Stone, Avebury, England*](#), 1995, Gift of the artist, 2014.0027

[Inkjet Print](#)

A general designation for the large class of printers used to print computer images. Inkjet printers make use of extremely small nozzles to deliver exact amounts of pigment to precise locations on the paper.



Kenojuak Ashevak, *Rabbit Eating Seaweed II*, 1999, Gift of H. G. Jones in honor of Marynell Dyatt Reece, 2011.0151

Intaglio

Intaglio represents any of the techniques in which an image or tonal area is printed from lines or textures scratched or etched into a metal plate (engraving, etching, drypoint, aquatint, lift ground, soft ground). The plate is covered with ink, then wiped clean, leaving ink in the incised lines or textures of the image. This plate is then printed in a press on moistened paper. The paper is forced down into the area of the plate holding ink, and the image is transferred to the paper.



Terry Evans, *Field Museum, Eastern Fence Lizards*, 2001, Museum purchase: R. Charles and Mary Margaret Clevenger Art Acquisition Fund, 2012.0062

Iris Print

A type of inkjet print printed from an Iris printer.



César Mazola Alvarez, [*untitled \(North American Imperialism\)*](#), 1961, Transfer from Art and Architecture Library, 1999.0360.04

Letterpress

Typographic printing from movable type.



Georges Jeannot, [*Bataillon en marche*](#), 1914–1918, Gift of professor Eric Gustav Carlson, 2014.0604

Lift-Ground Aquatint

A form of intaglio printing in which the artists draws with a specially formulated ink on a metal plate. The plate is then covered with an acid resistant ground and immersed in water. The characteristics of the drawing medium (which may be applied with a pen or brush) allow it to dissolve and work through the acid resistant ground. When bitten by acid, the final result resembles pen or brush work.



Todros Geller, [*Rural Wisconsin*](#), 1940, Gift of the WPA Arts Project, 0000.0779

Linoleum Cut

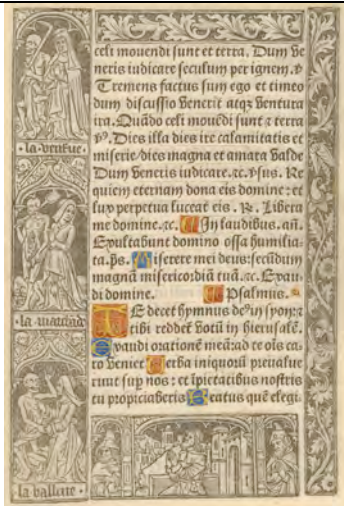
A relief print carved into linoleum rather than wood.



Louis Abel-Truchet, [La Galette des Rois](#), 1916, Gift of Professor Eric Gustav Carlson, 2014.1062

Lithograph

A printing technique in which the image is drawn on a very flat slab of limestone (or a specially treated metal plate). This stone is chemically treated so that ink, when rolled on to the stone, adheres only where the drawing was done. This inked image can then be transferred to a piece of paper with the help of a high pressure press.



Gilles Hardouyn (publisher), Antoine Chappiel (printer), [The Dance of Death](#), 1501, Museum purchase, 1971.0156

Metal Cut

A form of relief printing from an intaglio plate. In the 15th century, metal cuts often employed drill holes that printed as white dots. Engraved lines will print white rather than black in metal cut since the surface, rather than the marks in the plate, is inked.



Mario Avati, [Les Cafetieres \(Coffeepots\)](#), 1971, Gift of Hal M. Davison, Class of 1949, 1998.0206

Mezzotint

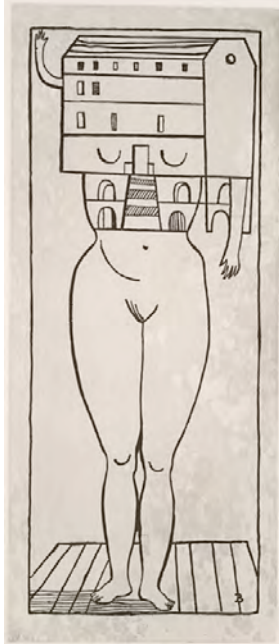
An intaglio process invented around 1650 that allows the printing of rich tonal areas of black and grey. The mezzotint process begins by texturing a metal plate in such a way that it will hold a great deal of ink and print a solid black field. This is done with a tool called a "rocker." A rocker is essentially a large curved blade with very fine teeth along its edge. This blade is rocked back and forth, putting courses of fine dots into the metal plate. After this has been done repeatedly the plate will be covered with fine stipples that can hold ink. The next step is to scrape away the stippled texture where lighter passages are needed. The more vigorously the plate is scraped the less ink it will hold and the whiter it will print. Mezzotint differs conceptually from other intaglio methods because the artist works from black to white rather than white to black. For this reason mezzotint lends itself to scenes with many dark passages.



Neal Ambrose-Smith, [sêy tu pn sqwllu \(Now That's a Coyote Story\)](#), 2004, Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, 2005.0082.01

Monotype

A form of printmaking in which the artist draws or paints on some material, such as glass, and then prints the image onto paper, usually with a press. The remaining pigment can then be reworked, but the subsequent print will not be an exact version of the previous print. Monotypes may be unique prints or variations on a theme.



Louise Bourgeois, *Femme Maison (Woman House)*, 1984,
Museum purchase: Letha Churchill Walker Memorial Art
Fund, 1994.0020

Photogravure

A means of printing a photographic image by the intaglio process. The photographic negative (which may be of an artist's drawing) is projected onto a sensitized gelatin emulsion or carbon tissue that is transferred to a copper plate. After washing, the plate areas that correspond to the image on the negative are dissolved, and the plate can be bitten by acid as in routine etching. In hand photogravure, which is most commonly used in printmaking, the copper plate is first prepared for aquatint etching. The end result can closely resemble a traditional linear etching or soft ground etching.



Guy Arnoux, *Le Soldat Laboureur*, 1917, Gift of Professor
Eric Gustav Carlson, 2014.0152

Photomechanical Relief Print

There were many printmaking methods available by the 1880s that allowed a black line drawing to be transferred to a relief printing block by photographic means. These are generically known as line blocks and the images printed from them typically share many of the qualities of woodcut. The means of transferring the image are often complex, and can involve such techniques as etching, photosensitized plates, or electrotyping light-sensitive gelatin plates.



Emile Bernard, [*La Lessive \(The Laundry\)*](#), 1889, 1952 reproduction, Museum purchase: Letha Churchill Walker Memorial Art Fund, 1978.0089

Photomechanical Reproduction

This term is used to describe a variety of processes involving the transfer of a photographic image to a printing matrix, such as an etching plate, relief block, or a lithographic stone. The term is used here whenever it is not certain exactly what photomechanical process is involved.



Pierre Abadie-Landel, [*L'Infirmier Militaire \(The Military Nurse\)*](#), 1914–1918, Gift of Professor Eric Gustav Carlson, 2014.0100

Pochoir

A stencil print that does not involve a screen. Usually pigment is brushed across the openings of the template. Often the brush marks are discernable.



Maurice Buset, [*La Lumière Blue \(prepatory drawing\)*](#), 1918, Gift of Professor Eric Gustav Carlson, 2014.1393.19

Proofs

Impressions of a print. In the case of an incomplete print they are referred to as “working proofs.”



Maria Arango, *To Those Who Would Catch Us*, 2001, Gift of BarenForum.org, 2002.0078.10

Relief Print

Any print in which the image is printed from the raised portions of a carved, etched, or cast block. A simple example would be a rubber stamp. The most common relief prints are woodcuts. The term "relief print" is used when it is not clear which kind of relief printing has been used (photomechanical or hand carved, for example).



John Baeder, *Chicken Chops*, 1980, Gift of Monis Schuster for Simon Schuster, 1997.0387

Screen Print

A form of stencil printing in which the stencil is adhered to a fine screen for support. Ink can be squeegeed through the screen onto paper. Screen printing can have a hard edged quality caused by the crisp edges of the stencil. Also referred to as "silk screen" and "serigraphy."

Serigraph

Another term for Screen Print. Please see "Screen Print."



James abbe, [untitled \(Kyra in Artists and Models\)](#), circa 1920s, Museum purchase, 1990.0135

Silver Print

A photographic print utilizing paper impregnated with silver nitrate (distinct from a platinum print, for example).



Avis Chitwood, [Sally Bean's Kitchen Door](#), circa 1930s, Gift of Avis Chitwood via her niece, Janice Gartrell, 1995.0061

Soft Ground

An etching technique in which the plate is covered with malleable ground through which a variety textures can be pressed, allowing them to be etched into the plate. For example, a piece of paper laid on top of a soft grounded plate can be drawn upon with a pencil, and the resulting etched image will resemble a pencil line drawn on paper. To be distinguished from "hard ground" used for simple line etching.



Giovanni Battista Piranesi, [*The Arch with a Shell Ornament, from Carceri d'invenzione*](#), circa 1749–1750, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 37.45.3(31)

[Sulphur Ground](#)

A technique in which a caustic sulphur compound is painted directly on an etching plate, or in which sulphur dust is otherwise applied to a plate. The resulting marks will hold ink and can be printed like an etching. The technique typically creates blotchy expanses of grey tones. This might be compared to printing rust marks on a steel or iron plate.



Henry Eric Bergman, [*The Snake Fence*](#), 1936, Gift of Bus and Ruby Jennings, Prairie Print Makers Collection, 1991.0294

[Wood Engraving](#)

A relief print carved in the end grain of a block of wood whose thickness is the same as the height as a piece of movable type ("type high"). This was traditionally a commercial technique practiced by specialists and used in magazines and book illustrations.



Adachi Ginkō, [Tea Ceremony \(No. 17 and 18\)](#), circa late 1870s, Gift of Fina C. Ott, 1979.0163

Woodcut

A relief print usually carved in the plank grain of a piece of wood. After the relief image has been carved in the plank with knives or gouges it is inked with a dauber or roller. It can then be printed by hand (in which case a sheet of paper is laid down on the inked plank and rubbed from the back with a smooth surface such as the palm of the hand or a wooden spoon) or with the help of a mechanical press.



Emile Bernard, [La vierge aux saintes](#), 1895, Museum purchase: R. Charles and Mary Margaret Clevenger Fund, 1994.0031

Zincograph

A lithograph done on a zinc plate instead of on a stone. The term is also used to designate a photo-etched relief print.