

ART

Newsletter

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Terms Defined

monotype: a print pulled in an edition of one. There is no series of identical prints that are signed and numbered.

brayer: a small, hand-held rubber roller used to spread printing ink evenly on a surface before printing.

matrix: an object upon which a design has been formed and which is then used to make an impression on a piece of paper, thus creating a print. A {wood} block, {metal} plate, or {lithographic} stone can be used as a matrix.

printing press: a device used to produce prints one copy at a time. It applies considerable pressure between a sheet of paper and an inked printing plate.

Printmaking 101 with Artist Barbara Ervin

Monotype prints are made by creating an image on a smooth non-absorbent matrix like a sheet of Plexiglas, then pressing a sheet of paper to the image to make the print. An image is created by painting or rolling several different color layers of ink onto glass thus creating one (mono) image that cannot be reprinted. With the application of pressure from a printing press, the image will transfer onto the paper.



The ink used in a monotype can be applied with a brush, rag or rolled up with a roller or brayer. During the printing process depending on the method of application and the thickness and texture of the ink, the ink may spread and blur as it is blotted or absorbed by the paper. The paper is placed on top of the plate and the transferred image is a mirror image of the original. How the ink is applied and manipulated with all of its individual characteristics will be reflected in the print, which is what makes monotypes so unique.

The question arises as to why a monotype and not a painting or watercolor? Why a “print”? The answer may be that a great deal of surprise is built into the printmaking process where the image is reversed, the image varies depending on how it’s inked, how much pressure is applied, and if it’s printed by an etching press.

There are a lot of unpredictable actions involved and the spontaneity of the process demands on energy, improvisation, impulse, expressiveness and patience. Each artist uses their own techniques with his or her own style to create the final image.

The following supplies are needed for creating a monotype print:

- oil relief ink;
- rolling brayers;
- paint brush;
- Plexiglas;
- baby powder;
- paper;
- burnt plate oil;
- paint thinner;
- paper towels or rags; and
- a printing press.

The first step involves mixing color inks to create the base color for the image. Step two, using the rolling brayers, the ink is placed onto the Plexiglas. Baby powder can be used in this step to block out ink to create stars or clouds in an image's sky.

Step three, paper is placed onto the Plexiglas and run through the printing press to transfer the image. White spots are rubbed out with turpentine rags to create a smooth finish. The Plexiglas is then wiped clean and the process is repeated four to eight times to create a final image.

Step four, the artist uses other techniques such as an eraser to remove unwanted color or the end of a paintbrush to create strokes within the image. Color pencils are sometimes used for detailing within the image.



Final Image

Printmaking Steps:



Supplies



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4



About the Artist

Barbara Ervin uses a variety of printmaking techniques including pencil, watercolor, handmade paper and marbleized paper to create different art pieces. Ervin's artwork draws strongly on nature and mirrors its beauty, harmony and rhythms.

Ervin, a life-long artist, discovered her passion for printmaking in high school after selling her first printed piece of artwork at a show for \$10. Born in Greenville, South Carolina, Ervin received her bachelor's degree and master's degree from the University of South Carolina.

In addition to being a professional printmaker, Ervin has taught art classes from elementary to college levels. Ervin's artwork has received numerous awards while being displayed throughout the Southeast in various exhibitions. Her artwork is a part of many private and public collections across the United States.

Ervin is the author of *Making Connections: Interdisciplinary Art Activities*, a guide for teachers to incorporate the arts into subjects such as English and language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and music.

How would you describe your artwork?

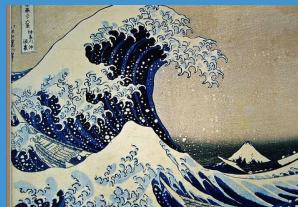
The images themselves are very abstract, the viewer decides where or what the pictures contain. As for the printmaking process, it's mechanical and spontaneous. Pictures are never planned, they just change throughout the process and a variety of materials are used to create the final product. For example, I may use plastic wrap or wood blocks to create water. The length of time spent on each piece varies, however, the average time spent is about three to 50 hours. My techniques have evolved over the years and are ultimately about thinking creatively because anything is possible in art.

Where do you draw your inspiration (events, artists, places)?

As for historical artists and styles, I enjoy studying the works of French impressionist Edgar Degas for his attention to detail and Japanese art for its harmonies of color. However, most of my inspiration is drawn from past experiences and photographs of places I've visited. I like to study cloud patterns and the colors that exist in everyday nature.



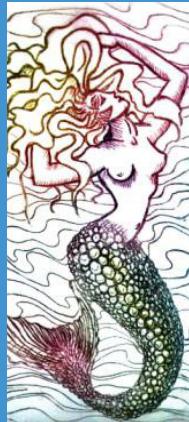
Printmaking Types



Relief Printing: the ink goes on the original surface of the matrix. Relief techniques include woodcut or woodblock as the Asian forms are usually known, wood engraving, linocut and metalcut.

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Intaglio: refers to any of various printing techniques, such as aquatint, metal engraving and etching. An etched or engraved plate is smeared with ink, the surface wiped clean, and the ink in the recesses then transferred to the paper.



Planographic: means printing from a flat surface, as opposed to a raised surface (as with relief printing or incised surface

as with intaglio printing). Planographic techniques include lithography, monotyping, and digital techniques.

Stencil: including screen-printing and pochoir. Screen-printing (*also known as “silk-screening” or “serigraphy”*) creates bold color using a stencil technique. Stencil printing is arguably the oldest form of graphic arts.



What aspects do you like and dislike about the printmaking process?

I truly enjoy the spontaneity of the process from start to finish. It can be frustrating at times when images do not come out as expected and waiting for inks to dry before moving to the next step. However, the creative process overall is exciting and liberating!

Describe your work area.

My in-home studio is filled with custom made shelves of art supplies, books and framing materials. I use several work spaces including my father’s large drawing board table, he was a mechanical engineer. I have an industrial size printing press, which was purchased about 30 years ago when I first started my career in printmaking. I also keep an inspirational board of art images and photographs for ideas about color, lines and shapes in nature.



Do you have advice for artists looking to get started in printmaking?

Be flexible, art is an unplanned process that requires creative thinking and patience. Never throw away images, even the “messed up” ones. I sometimes will go back and work on images I started three years prior and develop a final product. Explore, let go of preconceived ideas and think outside the box because the possibilities are endless from the materials used to the artwork that can be created.

For more information about Barbara Ervin’s artwork, please visit her website at www.barbaraervin.com.

