

Glossary of Processes

Albumen print - Albumen is egg white. This type of print is similar to a salted paper print, but with the silver nitrate-based emulsion infused into an egg white solution. This technique yields a smoother, shinier surface than silver nitrate alone.

Anthotype - Anthotypes use emulsions made from plants combined with distilled water or alcohol. The plant is pulped by hand or using a small blender, strained, then coated onto the paper. A transparent positive is placed over the image and exposed to the sun. All kinds of plants can be used, and exposure times can vary from several days to several weeks. They are not permanent but they can be somewhat preserved using a UV-resistant resin.

Aquatint - An intaglio printing process using a fine dust-like particle as a resist so that when the plate is immersed in the etching acid, a fine texture is created on the plate.

Archival pigment inkjet print - A digital print using pigmented ink laid down on a surface using an inkjet printer with nozzles. The most common type of digital print for exhibition. Also called, "inkjet print", "giclée, and "pigment print".

Block print - A relief print, either from linoleum or wooden blocks. See "relief print", "woodcut/ woodblock", and "linocut".

Bromoil - The bromoil process starts with a traditional silver gelatin print made in the darkroom. After rinsing, the silver print is placed in a bleaching solution that bleaches the silver down to a straw color. The image is then built back up using oil-based paints applied in a "pouncing" technique to build up tones. The result is a photograph that has the feel of an oil painting. See "silver gelatin print".

Calotype - The first type of photographic negative was made in the 1830s (patented in 1841 by William Henry Fox Talbot) using the calotype process. A calotype is made in a very similar way to a salt print, except that rather than being contact-printed, the sensitized paper is placed in a camera and exposed that way. The resulting negative is often waxed for durability. Fox Talbot printed his calotypes using the salt print method but calotype negatives can be used with any contact-printed photographic technique. Not to be confused with "kallitype" prints (see "kallitype"). See "salt print".

Carbon transfer print - A photographic process using sensitized pigmented gelatin tissues. Each color of tissue is exposed to UV light, hardening the pigmented gum according to the negative. The exposed gum layer is then transferred to another substrate - usually high quality paper. Colors can be exposed and layered to create full-color images.

Chine-collé - A printmaking process using tissue or thin paper between the ink layer and the main substrate. Usually used in etching but can be used with other printmaking processes.

Chlorophyll print - Not to be confused with anthotypes, which also rely on bleaching the natural dyes in plant-based emulsion. Chlorophyll prints are done directly on a leaf or flower petal as opposed to using an emulsion derived from plants and coated on paper as with anthotypes.

Collagraph - A printmaking technique that involves collaging various materials onto a hard plate in order to create a variety of shapes and textures. The collaged plate is covered in shellac and inked up. It can be printed either as an intaglio or relief plate.

Color reduction linocut - See "Reduction print"

Cryograms - From the Greek root word, "cryo-", meaning "cold" or "freezing". A version of photogram using ice to create the image. See "photogram" and "silver gelatin print".

Cyanotype - Also called a "blue print". A contact printed photographic process using ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide to create an iron-based emulsion. The emulsion is applied by hand to paper and exposed using a transparent negative to UV light. The UV light reacts with the iron to create a blue print. The print can be toned using tannic acid or a number of other substances.



Drypoint - An intaglio printmaking process that is simply direct etching by hand onto a plate using a sharp utensil. The etched lines are inked and transferred to paper using a press.

Engraving - A printmaking term used to describe an intaglio process by which the artist makes marks directly on the plate by hand, as with a needle, burin, rocker, or other tool.

Etching - An intaglio printmaking process that uses a strong acid to cut into unprotected areas of a metal plate. The plate is coated with ink and wiped off to leave ink in the cut areas of the plate. The plate is then passed through a printing press and the image transferred to paper.

Giclée - From the French word, "to spray". A giclée print is essentially the same as an archival pigment inkjet print. See "archival pigment inkjet print".

Ground - Soft ground, hard ground, soap ground, etc. "Ground" is essentially a resist. Usually ground is a waxy or tar-like substance but it is sometimes made from paint or other media. Different grounds will give different effects in printing and allow different techniques while engraving or etching the plate. Ground is applied to a metal plate and then removed through various techniques (see "aquatint", "drypoint", "engraving", "etching", "spit bite"). The exposed plate is then etched in an acid bath. The ground resists the acid leaving the grounded area unetched.

Gum Bichromate - Or, "gum printing". A contact printed photographic process using gum arabic mixed with pigment (usually watercolor pigments) and light-sensitive dichromates (usually ammonium or potassium). The emulsion is coated on the paper and exposed to negatives under UV light. Multiple colors can be built up using different pigments. Negatives are color balanced to accommodate these different colors.

Image transfer - Any of a number of techniques for transferring an image from one substrate to another. Usually from an archival pigment print made on a transparency, then transferred using alcohol gel (hand sanitizer), Mod Podge, or some other binder or solvent. There are a number of techniques for different surfaces and original print types. Also see "Photographic Transfer".

Intaglio - A printmaking term used to describe processes that involve ink settling into a cut or etched area of a plate; in essence, the opposite of relief. See "engraving", "etching", "mezzotint".

Jigsaw linocut - A linocut print made from multiple blocks that can be inked separately and "jigsawed" together to create the final print. See "linocut".

Kallitype - A photographic contact printing process using a sensitizer made from ferric oxalate and silver nitrate. The tonal range can vary from sepia, to reddish-brown, to cool black tones depending on the type of developer being used. Kallitype prints are often toned with platinum, palladium, or gold to achieve even deeper, richer tones and to enhance permanence.

Linocut - A relief printing technique that uses a linoleum block instead of wood. See, "relief print"

Lithograph - A printmaking process that uses a block of stone as a plate. An image is applied to the stone using wax or oil-based crayons. After the image is applied, the stone is treated with an acid and gum arabic mixture. The stone is then rolled with ink, however, the acid/gum arabic mixture allows the parts of the stone not covered in wax to repel the oil-based ink, thus leaving the ink only on the original drawing. There are many versions of lithography that do not use a stone, but use the same basic, "oil and water don't mix" concept.

Lith print - A variation of silver gelatin print using a special "lith" developer. The developer generally works more slowly than traditional developer and creates a wide variety of effects depending on the type of paper, the temperature and age of the developer, and the-chemical components of the developer being used. It has nothing to do with lithography in printmaking.

Lumen print - A variation on silver gelatin photograms in which objects (usually plant-based but sometimes not) are placed in contact with the paper and left to expose in UV light for a long period of time. As UV affects the silver in the paper, different colors and effects are achieved. Rather than developing the image, the exposed paper is placed in the fixative, which changes the colors usually to more neutral tones. As a result of this change, most lumen prints are digitally scanned to retain the pre-fixative brighter colors.

Mezzotint - A kind of intaglio print that uses an etched plate and a rocking tool to work the plate from dark to light, rather than the other way around, which is more common. It is very labor intensive and requires many hours of building up layers of tone.

Mokuhanga - A Japanese term meaning, "wood block print". Mokuhanga differs from other wood block printing techniques in its use of lower viscosity water-based inks as opposed to tackier oil-based inks and the use of a hand-barren as opposed to a press. These differences give mokuhanga prints a distinctive aesthetic quality.

Monoprint - A printmaking term for a one-off print. Similar to a monotype; the distinction being that a monoprint is taken from a plate that includes some features, i.e. etched or engraved areas, while a monotype is taken from a plate that is completely featureless.

Monotype - A printmaking term for a one-off print. There are many different ways to create a monotype, but essentially an image is applied to a clean plate - usually copper or zinc, but possibly Plexiglass or even thin Mylar or acetate - and then transferred to another surface via a press or hand-pressed technique. The term could also be used to refer to any one-off kind image made with a printmaking technique.

Mordantage - A silver gelatin print technique that uses a chemical combination to detach the silver from the substrate, allowing the artist to arrange the silver and create veils and other effects.

Photo encaustic - Encaustic is pigmented wax. "Photo-encaustic" can signify a photographic print whose surface has been covered and enhanced with pigmented wax, creating a variety of textures and effects. Photo encaustic can also signify a technique of transferring a toner-based digital image onto a surface prepared with wax. In either case, paints and other pigments are often used to enhance the original photographic image.

Photogram - A cameraless photographic image that entails setting objects directly on sensitized paper and exposing the paper to light. The result, after development, is a reverse "shadow" of the image. Photograms can be made on any sensitized paper but are most commonly made on silver gelatin paper in a traditional darkroom. See "silver gelatin print".

Photogravure - A traditional photogravure is done on a metal plate. A sheet of carbon tissue is used in between the plate and a phototransparency. The image is exposed, creating a carbon-based image on the plate that can be etched in acid like a traditional etching. The plate is then inked and printed. In contemporary practice, a photopolymer print (see below) is often called a "photogravure".

Photopolymer gravure / etching / photo intaglio - Similar to a photogravure, except the image is transferred onto a thin metal plate coated with a light-sensitive polymer. The plate is exposed to UV with a transparency, with the polymer hardening where light hits it. The plate is then etched using regular water, which washes away the unexposed - and hence softer - polymer. After hardening in another UV exposure, the plate can be inked and printed like any intaglio plate. "Solarplate" is a brand of photopolymer plate.

Photographic Transfer - One of several different methods for getting a photograph off one substrate onto another. Most digital variations involve some kind of solvent that breaks down the pigments in a print, allowing them to be transferred by pressure to another surface. Other analog methods involve detaching the image from its original substrate by heat or chemical action, removing it, and then transferring it to another substrate. Mordantage and integral film lifts are examples of analog film transfers. Also see, "Image transfer".

Piezography - A type of archival pigment inkjet print using proprietary pigmented inks and a printer converted to specific Piezograph use. Essentially, the printer is converted to use up to 9 different black inks to create very high quality black and white archival pigment inkjet prints. See "archival pigment inkjet print".

Polaroid lift / emulsion lift - Certain Polaroid instant films can be peeled apart in a way that the image is able to come off of the support and transferred to another piece of paper. This flimsy "film" with an image on it can be manipulated and lifted onto another surface. It can also be transferred to some objects.

Polaroid transfer - Different than a lift, a Polaroid transfer is made from a different type of Polaroid film that peels apart to reveal the dyes that make up the image. These dyes are then transferred to another surface - usually some kind of watercolor paper.

Platinum/ palladium print - A photographic process using platinum(II) and palladium in combination with ferric oxalate to create the emulsion. After sensitizing the paper, a UV exposure is made by contact printing with a negative. The exposed print is then developed in ammonium citrate, fixed, and rinsed. As platinum gives more contrast and palladium adds warmer tone, the proportion of platinum to palladium in the sensitizing solution can give varying results. The process is considered to give the widest range of tones of any contact printing process. Prints can also be toned to give further variants. Also called, "platinotype", "palladium print" or "platinum print", depending on the predominance of one metal. **Plexiglass** - Wet plate collodion on Plexiglass or clear acrylic sheet. See "wet plate collodion".

Reduction print - A relief print that uses one block (woodblock or linoleum) to create a multicolored print. With each successive color, the artist carves away or reduces the amount of surface space that gets inked.

Relief - A printmaking term used to describe processes that involve ink remaining on the raised surface of the print; in essence, the opposite of intaglio. See "woodcut/woodblock".

Salt print - Also called "salted paper print". The paper is first soaked in or coated with a salt solution before being coated with a silver nitrate sensitizer. The salt allows the silver to bind to the paper when exposed to light. The exposed paper is developed in another salt solution. The print can be toned using gold or other toning solutions to achieve tones ranging from warm browns to cool black tones.

Screen print - Also called a silkscreen or serigraph. A planographic printmaking process that often uses light-sensitive emulsion to create an image on a screen mesh. The sensitized screen is exposed with a positive image to UV light, which hardens the emulsion in specific areas. The unhardened emulsion is washed out, leaving those areas of the screen open. Ink can then be pushed through the open parts of the screen to print the image. Screen printing is often done without any photographic emulsion and simply using screen filler, tape, or other adhesives to block areas of the screen that will not have ink.

Silver gelatin print - A photographic print using a paper coated with silver nitrate suspended in gelatin as an emulsion. This type of paper is more sensitive to light than other hand-coated emulsions, giving the artist the ability to use an enlarger to create enlarged positive prints of negatives. Also sometimes called, "Gelatin silver". Also see "Lith print" and "Mordantage".

Spit Bite - A variation of the aquatint technique in which etching acid is applied directly to the plate as opposed to immersing the plate into a bath of acid. The acid is diluted with water and spit or gum arabic.

Sugarlift - An etching using a sugar-based solution - usually a saturated sugar water solution, but sometimes corn syrup or other sugar-based liquids are experimented with. The sugar solution is painted onto the plate, then a thin layer of ground is added. The plate is then immersed in etching acid, causing the sugar to dissolve and lift the ground off of the plate. This creates a unique pattern or texture. The plate is then coated with aquatint particles and etched again. See "aquatint" and "etching".

Tintype - See "wet plate collodion"

Toner transfer - An image transfer process using a laser printed image made with carbon or plastic-based toner. The toner can be transferred to another surface using a number of varieties of solvents such as acetone or wintergreen oil. The transfer can also be created by using Mod Podge or acrylic medium to adhere the toner-based image to a substrate, waiting until it is dry, and then using water to rub the paper backing off, leaving the toner (and hence the image) still stuck to the substrate.

Van Dyke brown print - A photographic print whose sensitizer combines silver nitrate with ferric ammonium citrate. The sensitized paper is contact-printed with a negative and developed in acidic water. The result is a brown-toned print. The name is derived from the color of the print being similar to the brown color favored by the painter, Anthony van Dyke.

Wet plate collodion - A photographic process that uses collodion as a substrate to accept silver nitrate, thus sensitizing the plate. The plate is placed into a camera, and the plate is exposed, developed and fixed while the silver/ collodion emulsion is still wet. There are three main types of wet plate collodion plates: 1) An ambrotype is a positive image made on glass. The image is backed using some type of black substance - ink, asphaltum, or black fabric, for example. 2) A glass negative can be made and then contact printed using a wide variety of hand-coated photographic processes, traditionally, albumen. 3) A tintype is a positive image made on a piece of metal. Traditionally tin was used, but modern practitioners usually use aluminum. Therefore, these plates are sometimes called aluminotypes or ferrotypes, referring to the aluminum substrate.

Whiteground - Also called "soap ground". White ground is made of soap, fat, and pigment. Unlike traditional grounds, which are totally resistant to the etchant, white ground gradually dissolves making it possible to achieve a very wide range of tones and effects that are sometimes unpredictable.

Woodcut / woodblock - A relief printing technique using carved wood blocks as the printing plate. The ink is rolled onto the raised surfaces of a carved block and paper is placed on top. The ink transfers to the paper. See "relief print"

Ziatype - Very similar to a platinum/palladium print, except without the platinum, so much less expensive. The ziatype uses ferric ammonium oxalate, potassium chlorate, palladium chloride, and lithium chloride sensitizer.



Ainsley Steeves
Untitled
Lithographs
11" x 7" ea.
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