

SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL

PRINTMAKING

CRITERIA

DEFINITION

The definition of a print, like that of any other Fine Art form is in a constant state of evolution. An important characteristic of the print is its identity as a MULTIPLE. An artist could create just one impression from a plate or block, but the usual practice is for an EDITION of many prints to be struck. Individual prints in an edition are signed and numbered by the artist. (ie: 7/40 means the 7th print in an edition of 40). If the artist decides to continue with this particular plate or block, changing the image slightly or the color, this will be indicated on the next edition as STATE TWO or "second state", for as many changes and editions as the artist feels required.

The criteria for originality in a print have the weight of long tradition to support them.

"The artist creates an image on a metal plate, stone, wood block or other surface, (as in silkscreen), as a distinctive and individual work. The design is conceived by the artist, printed under the supervision of the artist, and meeting standards of excellence established by the artist, designates the print as an original work of art."

Definition of an Original – From the Print and Drawing Council of Canada, Toronto, Ontario.

"The artist alone or in collaboration has created the master image or images in or upon the plate, stone, woodblock or other material for the purpose of creating the print. The image is conceived and developed within the print medium and does not constitute a reproduction of any image which existed previously in total in another medium. The print is made from the said material by the artist or pursuant to his/her directions. The finished print is approved by the artist."

Offset reproductions are not considered original prints and should not be sold as such. In this case, original art work exists as a painting or a drawing. The original piece is photographed, color separations are produced, and colors are mixed to reproduce those existing in the original work of art. Each of these color separations is exposed to a photographic litho plate which in turn are developed and placed onto an offset commercial printing press. Numerous copies are printed. The artist inspects and accepts those that are of good quality. The artist signs his/her name to the off-set reproductions, numbers the edition and puts the title and date on. Posters are produced in this manner. The SCC markets do not accept off-set reproductions.

The traditional idea of a print is a flat inked image on paper. However, innovations in recent printmaking have changed our conception of what exactly constitutes (physically) a print. Many prints today have three-dimensional objects or areas incorporated in them, and some are actual free standing three-dimensional pieces. Also, a number of processes involve no ink at all (ie: embossed prints). The deciding factor must be the artist's intent.

TECHNIQUES

The major traditional categories of printmaking are:

Relief Print

Is created by cutting or carving the background or negative area away as in a woodcut or linocut. What remains is a raised surface which is inked with a brayer and printed with a press or burnished by hand. There are contemporary relief methods which are produced using cardboard, wood veneer, masonite, Gesso, plaster or glue.

Intaglio

Includes engraving, etching, drypoint, mezzotint, and aquatint. The image areas are incised into the metal or lucite plate, either by sharp tools or the action of acids. Ink is spread over the surface of the plate and wiped with tarlatan, the small crevices hold the ink. Damp paper is placed over the plate and as it passes through the press, it is forced into the depressed areas and picks up the image. All of these techniques may be employed on one plate.

Lithography (Planographic Process)

The printing surface is flat; neither raised nor depressed. A drawing is made flat; neither raised nor depressed. The surface is then treated with chemicals so that the image accepts ink and the non-image areas repel ink. In this case, printing depends on a chemical reaction – the mutual antipathy of grease and water. Paper is placed over the stone or plate and put through the lithographic press. Lithography is done in either black and white or in color. The prints tend to be identical. (In the intaglio process, where each print is individually hand wiped, there may be slight differences in tone between each print in the edition).

Serigraphy

Also known as silkscreen or screen printing. Silk or nylon or rayon fabric is stretched tightly across a wooden frame. The image areas are placed on the fabric by various modern methods which are adaptations of the basic stencil-making technique. A squeegee pulled across the screen forces ink through the image area and onto the paper directly beneath. Silkscreen prints tend to be identical.

Collagraph

Is created by gluing a wide variety of collage material on masonite, cardboard, metal plate, lucite or plexiglass. The collagraphy differs from the cardboard relief print in that it is printed as an intaglio plate. Collagraphy stems from the term meaning “glue” or “to glue” and the word “graphic” pertaining to written or drawn material. Ink is applied by squeezing ink with small sections of mattboard or rolling ink into and on raised and lower surfaces of the plate and then

with daubers and tarlatans wiping ink into crevices and lowered areas while removing excess ink from the surface. Printing is done on an etching press, placing the wet paper over the collagraph. An extra foam rubber blanket is placed over the regular felt blanket before passing through the press, allowing the paper to be gradually pressed into the deep crevices.

Monotype or Monoprint

Technically, a print pulled in an edition of one. It is created by brushing, drawing or rolling ink (with lithotine, varnish or linseed oil added), paint or watercolor on the glass, lithostone, marble, slate, formica or metal surfaces. Before printing the image it can be scraped, drawn or rubbed. A dampened sheet of paper is placed over the format and run through the press (either the lithographic press or the etching press) or it can be burnished by hand.

Viscosity Printing

Viscosity printing is a form of Intaglio printmaking. The word “viscosity” refers to the oiliness of the etching ink and viscosity printing is a method of ink application (by hand wiping and roller application) to an etching plate that carries three distinct levels. One viscosity repels the other, leaving the colors separated or blended as required. One pull through the press completes the print.

Print Terminology

Every original print should carry the artist’s signature, either on the lower margin, on the face of the print itself or on the back of the print. Lithographs are often signed on the back for convenience – then when mounted, the signature is repeated underneath the bottom of the print. Some artists also identify their work with a “chop” mark along with a signature. This might be the printer’s mark, the publishers mark, or the workshop mark.

In addition to the signature, there may be a title, a date, and one or more of the following phrases to indicate the nature of the print and its sequence in the edition as follows:

Trial Proof

These are impressions pulled during the attempt to stabilize the image technically and aesthetically. They often will show color changes and drawing corrections.

Bon A Tirer or Printer’s Proof

This impression, pulled after trial proofing is finished, sets the standard of quality for the edition. The initials “B.A.T” are often used to denote the Bon a Tirer.

Experimental Proof

A print which is an aesthetic or technical experiment; which may or may not be printed beyond a few impressions. These impressions carry a letter of the alphabet. (Proof A,B,C,D, etc.).

Edition 1/10 through 10/10 (or more)

Consecutively numbered impressions comprise the artists's edition. The bottom number always indicates the size of the edition and the top number indicates the sequence in which the impressions were signed.

Artist's Proof

Any impression elected to be kept which are a slight deviation, either good or bad, from the edition. Only a very few such impressions should exist for each edition.

State II, III, etc.

An artist may decide to do two or more versions of the same image, altering the color or making minimal changes on the plate, stone, or other format. In such a case, the new version is called State II, III, etc. of the same print. Such additional prints are usually printed in smaller edition sizes.

Cancellation Proof

An impression taken from a plate, stone or block after it has been defaced at the end of the run is called a cancellation proof.

Re Strike

The term "restrike" is used when prints are taken from a block or plate at a date much later than the original run. This term clearly does not apply to images printed in sets as a method of editioning, but only when blocks or plates are used again, to pull a fresh series of images when the declared edition has already been completed. These prints should be declared as "restrikes".

Selecting a Print

The first question is: Has the entry been listed in the correct category? That is: Is it an original print and not an off-set "reproduction" or "copy" of some existing work?

Acknowledging that printmaking joins drawing, painting and photography into one, the criteria for selecting a good drawing (such as sensitivity and activity of line throughout, etc.) painting (such as a powerful statement, flow of color and form, etc.), photography (such as a touch of insight, etc.) could all apply to the print.

Content and Technique: These are synonymous. They go hand in hand – one can not be successfully completed without the other. The ability of the artist in printmaking, to be able to skillfully use the tools is of equal importance as the ability to conceive the idea behind the work.