

PRINTMAKING – HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Printmaking has a long history throughout the world. It is an interesting approach to art making because it gives many unexpected results and can lead to new ways of thinking.

1. Carved relief blocks, seals, capable of making an impression were used in Egypt, Babylonia, Crete, and Rome.
2. *Seals* were used to identify people, animals, and objects.
3. Chinese are believed to be the first people to develop the idea of using carved relief stamps to print multiple images on surfaces around 1 AD about a century before the invention of paper.
4. The spread of Buddhism gave impetus to printmaking because the sutra had to be reproduced many times on scrolls in order to teach the people the faith.
5. Woodcut prints were used on textiles in the East and the West, and by the end of the 14th century they were also used to decorate furniture and leather.
6. During the 15th century paper became more plentiful and woodcut printing flourished providing everyday people with inexpensive original art works. Germany became the centre of European woodcut printmaking.
7. Initially prints were monochrome (one colour) with other colours being stenciled in after the print was made. Albrecht Dürer (1486 - 1528) is one of the most famous Renaissance woodcut printmakers.
8. During the 17th century the Japanese school Ukiyo-ye (meaning pictures of the floating world) used woodcuts to show scenes of everyday life.
9. By the end of the century the Ukiyo-ye prints evolved from monochromatic to five colours. This was a very complex process that was highly refined by such artists as Utamaro and Hokusai.
10. Japanese prints influenced European art because of explorations by artists such as Gauguin and the Impressionists.
11. At the end of the 18th century linoleum, a combination of ground cork and linseed oil was invented.
12. Linoleum block printing became popular with artists such as Picasso and Kandinsky.
13. Monotypes were developed by an Italian artist, Castiglioni who lived in the 17th century.
14. During the 19th century a new interest in monoprinting developed in the United States and Europe.