

Information sheet Printmaking Terms

À la poupée:

A print is printed in colour *à la poupée* when coloured ink is applied directly to a plate's surface and worked into the appropriate area of the design using cotton daubs called dollies, or in French, *poupée*.

Chine appliqué (chine collé):

A *chine appliqué* or *chine collé* is a print in which the image is impressed onto a thin sheet of China (or other similar) paper which is backed by a stronger, thicker sheet. China paper takes an intaglio impression more easily than regular paper, so *chine appliqué* prints generally show a richer impression than standard prints. Proof prints are often done as *chine appliqués*.

Edition:

An edition of a print includes all the impressions published at the same time or as part of the same publishing event. A *first edition* print is one which was issued with the first published group of impressions. First edition prints are sometimes pre-dated by a proof edition. Editions of a print should be distinguished from states of a print. There can be several states of a print from the same edition, and there can be several editions of a print all with the same state.

Intaglio:

An intaglio print is one whose image is printed from a recessed design incised or etched into the surface of a plate. In this type of print the ink lies below the surface of the plate and is transferred to the paper under pressure. The printed lines of an intaglio print stand in relief on the paper. Intaglio prints have platemarks.

Lettering or Letterpress:

The lettering of a print refers to the information, usually given below the image, concerning the title, artist, publisher, engraver and other such data.

Limited Edition:

A limited edition print is one in which a limit is placed on the number of impressions pulled in order to create a scarcity of the print. Limited editions are usually numbered and are often signed. Limited editions are a relatively recent development, dating from the late nineteenth century. Earlier prints were limited in the number of their impressions solely by market demand or by the maximum number that could be printed by the medium used. The inherent physical limitations of the print media and the relatively small size of the pre-

twentieth century print market meant that non-limited edition prints from before the late nineteenth century were in fact quite limited in number even though not intentionally so. German printmaker Adam von Bartsch, in his 1821 *Anleitung zur Kupferstichkunde*, estimated the maximum number of quality impressions it was possible to pull using different print media.

- Engraving: 500 (and about the same number of weaker images)
- Stipple: 500 (and about the same number of weaker images)
- Mezzotint: 300 to 400, though the quality suffers after the first 150
- Aquatint: Less than 200
- Wood block: Up to 10,000

It was only with the development of lithography and of steel-facing of metal plates in the nineteenth century that tens of thousands of impressions could be pulled without a loss of quality. These technological developments led to the idea of making limited edition prints, by which printmakers created an appearance of rarity and individuality for multiple-impression art.

Numbered Print:

A numbered print is one which is part of a limited edition and which has been numbered by hand. The numbering is usually in the form of x/y, where y stands for the total number of impressions in this edition and x represents the specific number of the print. The number of a print always indicates the order in which the prints were numbered, not necessarily the order in which the impressions were pulled. This, together with the fact that later impressions are sometime superior to earlier pulls, means that lower numbers do not generally indicate better quality impressions. As with signed prints, the numbering of prints is a development of the late nineteenth century.

Original Print:

An original print is one printed from a matrix on which the design was created by hand and issued as part of the original publishing venture or as part of a connected, subsequent publishing venture. For fine art prints the criteria used is more strict. A fine art print is original only if the artist both conceived and had a direct hand in the production of the print. An original print should be distinguished from a reproduction, which is produced photomechanically, and from a restrike, which is produced as part of a later, unconnected publishing venture.

Plate:

A {metal} plate is a flat sheet of metal, usually copper, steel or zinc, used as a matrix for a print. Metal plates are used for intaglio prints and for some lithographs.

Platemark:

A platemark is the rectangular ridge created in the paper of a print by the edge of an intaglio plate. Unlike a relief or planographic print, an intaglio print is printed under considerable

pressure, thus creating the platemark when the paper is forced together with the plate. Some reproductions have a false platemark.

Print:

A single print is a piece of paper upon which an image has been imprinted from a matrix. In a general sense, a print is the set of all the impressions made from the same matrix. By its nature, a print can have multiple impressions.

Proof:

A proof is an impression of a print pulled prior to the regular, published edition of the print. A *trial or working proof* is one taken before the design on the matrix is finished. These proofs are pulled so that the artist can see what work still needs to be done to the matrix. Once a printed image meets the artist's expectations, this becomes a *bon à tirer* ("good to pull") proof. This proof is often signed by the artist to indicate his approval and is used for comparison purposes by the printer. An *artist's proof* is an impression issued extra to the regular numbered edition and reserved for the artist's own use. Artist's proofs are usually signed and are sometimes marked "A.P.", "E.A." or "H.C." Commercial publishers found that there was a financial advantage to offering so-called "proofs" for sale and so developed other types of proofs to offer to collectors, generally at higher prices.

Proof before letters (Avant les lettres): An impression pulled before the title is added below the image.

Scatched letter proof: An impression in which the title is lightly etched below the image.

Remarque proof: An impression pulled before the Remarque is removed.

Relief:

A relief print is one whose image is printed from a design raised on the surface of a block. In this type of print the ink lies on the top of the block and is transferred to the paper under light pressure.

Signed:

A signed print is one signed, in pencil or ink, by the artist and/or engraver of the print. A print is said to be signed in the plate if the artist's signature is incorporated into the matrix and so appears as part of the printed image. Proof prints were originally signed as "proof" that the impression met the artist's expectation. Later proof prints were signed in order to add commercial value to these impressions. In the late nineteenth century, in response to the development of photomechanical reproduction techniques, fine arts prints were signed by the artists in order to distinguish between original prints and reproductions. Seymour Haden and James McNeil Whistler are usually credited with introducing this practice in the 1880s.

State:

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A state of a print includes all the impressions pulled without any change being made to the matrix. A first state print is one of the first group of impressions pulled. Different states of a print can reflect intentional or accidental changes to the matrix. States of a print should be distinguished from editions of a print. There can be several editions of a print which are the same state, and there can be several states of a print in the same edition.