

Bracken Press **print-workshop**

Information sheet Lino / block printing

Linocut is a **printmaking** technique, a variant of **woodcut** in which a sheet of **linoleum** (sometimes mounted on a wooden block) is used for the relief surface. A design is cut into the linoleum surface with a sharp knife, V-shaped **chisel** or **gouge**, with the raised (uncarved) areas representing a reversal (mirror image) of the parts to show printed. The linoleum sheet is inked with a roller (called a **brayer**), and then impressed onto paper or fabric. The actual printing can be done by hand or with a press.



Although linoleum as a floor covering dates to the 1860s, the linocut printing technique was used first by the artists of **Die Brücke** in Germany between 1905–13 where it had been similarly used for wallpaper printing. They initially described these prints as woodcuts, which sounded more respectable.

Since the material being carved has no directional grain and does not tend to split, it is easier to obtain certain artistic effects with lino than with most woods, although the resultant prints can lack the often angular grainy character of woodcuts and **engravings**. Lino is generally much easier to cut than wood, especially when heated, but the pressure of the printing process degrades the plate faster and it is difficult to create larger works due to the material's fragility.



Linocuts can also be achieved by the careful application of **sodium hydroxide** in a paste to parts of the surface of the lino. This creates a surface similar to a soft ground **etching** and these caustic-lino plates can be printed in either a relief, intaglio or a **viscosity printing** manner.



Colour linocuts can be made by using a different block for each colour as in a woodcut, but, as [Pablo Picasso](#) (Spanish artist) demonstrated quite effectively, such prints can also be achieved using a single piece of linoleum in what is called the 'reductive' print method. Essentially, after each successive colour is imprinted onto the paper, the artist then cleans the lino plate and cuts away what will not be imprinted for the subsequently applied colour.[1]

Due to ease of use, linocut is widely used in schools to introduce children to the art of printmaking, using it to complete

many tasks in the art lesson rather than going straight for the pencil and eraser; similarly, non-professional artists often cut lino rather than wood for printing. However, in the contemporary art world the linocut is an established professional print medium, following its use by Pablo Picasso and [Henri Matisse](#).

