

This is printing without the ink!

A **mold** or **die** is created and then pressed into paper to produce a subtle **raised** or **indented** three-dimensional image on paper. **Blind embossing** (raised) and **debossing** (indented) uses no ink and is used to highlight a specific area/space/surface producing a clean and distinctive inkless relief print.

In industry the process is often used in combination with foil stamping and uses two molds one raised and one recessed. The dies fit into each other so that when the paper is pressed between them, the raised die forces the stock into the recessed die and creates the embossed impression. A specific level of pressure is applied to the dies in order to squeeze the fibers of the paper, which results in a permanently raised area on the surface. These industrial dies or molds are made using metal plates.



How it was developed:

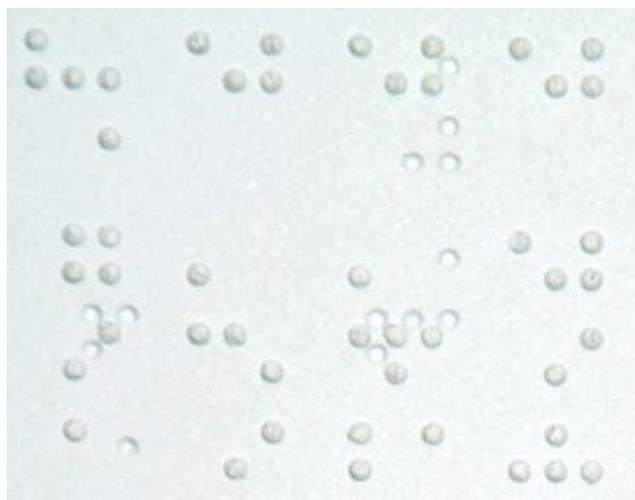
The printing of embossed books for **blind people** began at the end of the eighteenth century, after Valentin Haüy invented the process of embossing letters from the standard Roman alphabet on paper in 1784 in Paris.

Printing presses for **embossing books** were established on a small scale in other parts of Europe (such as Vienna, with the invention of Klein type in 1807 by Johann Wilhelm Klein), but it was following the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 that experiments began to spread more widely.

Many veterans returned home, after the war, with visual disabilities caused by injury and disease, reinforcing the long-standing association of poverty with blindness therefore **embossed literature** developed in the context of new philosophic and

medical understanding of tactile ability, as well as a social concern to extend literacy skills – and hence employment – **to blind people.**

A selection of Braille dots



The inventor James Gall introduced embossed literature to Britain with the 1827 publication of his first class book for blind people in a raised angular letter type: within five years fifteen raised alphabets were submitted to a competition held by the Society of Arts for Scotland, Edinburgh. In Britain, religious groups were largely responsible for the establishment of embossing presses, keen to spread the word of God to new communities.

Equipment/Materials needed:

Etching press
Variety of weighty cotton rich papers
such as:
Fabriano Unica 250 gsm cream/white paper
Canaletto 300 gsm
Zerkall 350 gsm paper
BFK Rives 280 gsm
Somerset Satin White 250 gsm paper
Somerset Velvet Antique 280 gsm paper
Blotting towels
Rolling pin
Greyboard- acts as a base for the mold

Craft knife
Scalpel
Scissors
Safety ruler
Circle cutter
Pliers
Sharps bin
Pencil
Cutting mat
Tissue paper

Collection of relief object materials- things to emboss **but NO METAL items & no more than 2 mm thick**

The process:

Paper needs to be **soaked** for at least 30 mins and **blotted** to be used **damp** so that when pressed it will easily mold around the 'die' or mold to give an image that is either raised or indented depending on which way the paper is viewed.

A **mold** will be made up of anything you want to blind emboss/deboss. The objects do not need to be stuck down with glue unless you want to make an edition- a copy or replica of a work of art made from a master. It commonly refers to a series of identical impressions or **prints** made from the same **printing** surface or mold in this case.

The mold is covered with tissue paper, the blotted damp paper placed on top and covered with another layer of tissue. The press blankets carefully placed over the layers and then all items are passed through the press.

Finishing:

Leave the embossed paper to dry as flat as possible. The image will stay in place for a very, very long time.

Further Reading/websites:

Barbara Walker is the Birmingham-based artist whose exhibition 'Vanishing Point' showed their blind embossed work.

<https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/qa-barbara-walker-artist-making-black-histories-visible/>

Ben Langlands & Nikki Bell are a couple who work together, making art that explores the impact of architectural structures upon human behaviour. In their series Enclosure and Identity, the artists examine institutional and potentially oppressive buildings, such as prisons, churches and mosques.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/langlands-and-bell-great-mosque-samarra-iraq-p78030>

Emily Harvey- a Yorkshire based printer with an inventive approach who is a lover of improvisation and has a wide and varied printing knowledge. Her website is very colourful and knowledgeable.

<https://thecuriousprintmaker.co.uk/blind-embossing/>

<https://thecuriousprintmaker.co.uk/artists-prints-with-blind-embossing/>

Useful Resources:

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/> for papers

<https://www.greatart.co.uk/>

<https://artdiscount.co.uk/>

<http://www.stcuthbertsmill.com/st-cuthberts-mill-paper/somerset-printmaking/>

Suggested Courses for Further Development:

Introduction to Printmaking, Explore Printmaking, Drypoint, Woodcut Relief, Collagraph, Lino and Monoprint taster days.