

Lino Printing - Single Colour & Jigsaw Technique

Background/Context

Lino Printing is a traditional relief printing technique where the printing plate is cut or carved into lino. The process dates back to the late 1800s as a way of printing wallpaper designs and was developed as an artform by many famous artists including Picasso, Matisse and Kandinsky. Once the lino is carved it is then inked up and printed using a press or pressure applied by hand to transfer the ink to the paper.

Equipment needed

- PPE (apron & gloves)
- Inks - oil based give the best results but water based block printing ink can also be used. We recommend Hawthorn Stay Open Inks rolled out with a tiny drop of cobalt driers to help the ink dry thoroughly.
- Lino
- Bench hook
- Roller & palette knife
- Lino/woodcut carving tools
- Albion press/baren (or wooden spoon)
- Paper larger than your lino (smooth cartridge paper ideally as textured papers give a textured print)
- Tracing paper/Saral paper

The process

Carving

Use a bench hook to carve your lino on safely. You can draw straight on the lino and start cutting spontaneously or draw out a design to transfer onto the lino using tracing or Saral paper. Remember that the design will need to be cut in reverse as it will print back to front. Always carve away from yourself to cut safely.

Printing

Roll out a thin layer of oil based ink onto a perspex or glass surface (we recommend Stay Open Hawthorn inks for this process).

Roll the ink straight onto the lino itself, ensuring an even coverage is applied fully. Set up your lino in the press face up and carefully place your paper down on top. You'll then need to apply some packing sheets before pulling it through the press (how many you'll need will depend on the size of the lino and the pressure applied from the press, ask a technician if in doubt).

If you're printing without a press, a baren (or a wooden spoon) can be used to apply pressure onto the paper to pick up the ink. Lino printing generally doesn't need as

much pressure as intaglio processes and so some good results can be achieved without the need for a press.

Jigsaw Technique

This method of linocut is a way of creating a multi colour print with only one layer and by only taking one print from the lino block. Essentially your lino will be cut into separate pieces using a craft knife and each piece is inked up with a different colour and then the pieces reassembled before printing (like a jigsaw). This is a simple and effective way to achieve multi colour prints.

Cleaning Up

Always use vegetable oil on a rag first when cleaning oil based ink and then once most of the ink is removed use a soapy water spray on a clean rag to remove the vegetable oil residue. Everything including the roller, lino block, palette knives and surfaces should be cleaned in this way. Never try to clean oil based ink with water at the sink.

Finishing

Prints using oil based inks usually take around 2 days to dry properly depending on environmental conditions, longer if on non-absorbent paper. Store dry prints wrapped in tissue paper.

Further Reading

Angie Lewin - Lino print artist & wood engraver <https://www.angielewin.co.uk/>
Book: '*Linocut for Artists & Designers*' by Nick Morley (aka Linocut Boy)

Useful Resources

Hawthorn Printmakers for Stay Open Inks - <https://hawthornprintmaker.com/>
Handprinted for other inks and lino tools - <https://handprinted.co.uk/>
GreatArt for lino tools (Abig wooden sets or the more expensive Pfeil tools) - <https://www.greatart.co.uk/>

Suggested Courses for Further Development

Our Explore Printmaking or Introduction to Printmaking courses cover the linocut technique and lino reduction methods. We also run regular short two-session courses in lino reduction printing.

Members are able to use our Albion and relief presses in the workshop once they are inducted. We also sell inks, Abig lino tools and lino at the workshop.