

What is relief printing?

Relief printing is a method used to make multiple images, in which ink is transferred under pressure to paper or another support by the raised parts of a prepared printing block, surface or texture.

Relief printing is the oldest and most durable method of making prints, dating back eleven hundred years to hand printed scrolls made in China. Relief printing developed in Europe during the 1450's, influenced by the innovation of moveable type and the printing press. Popular Ukiyo-e woodblock printmaking emerged in Japan in the 1600's.

Common relief print methods for monochrome and colour prints employed by artists include wood and linocuts, rubber stamps, wood engravings and collagraphs. Later print techniques and industrial innovations such as lithography, etching and in the twentieth century screen printing and digital processes, largely superseded the relief method.

Relief print techniques were championed by Australian artists Thea Proctor and Margaret Preston in the 1930's. Indigenous artists have had a strong influence upon the emergence of contemporary relief printmaking in the 1980's with leading exponents including Butcher Cherel, Bede Tungutalum, Alick Tipoti, Jimmy Pike and Dennis Nona.

For a simple animated step by step diagram of the relief print process please see the website listed below.

<http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint/flash.html>