Identifying Antique Commercial Printing Processes
And the Basics of Authenticating Antique and Art Prints

David Cycleback

Identifying Antique Commercial Printing Processes, And the Basics of Authenticating Antique and Art Prints

by

David Cycleback

Center for Artifact Studies-- cycleback.com

email: cycleback@cycleback.com

This book reprints previously published articles by art historian David Cycleback. The book focuses on identifying printing processes, but includes additional important chapters on authenticating and dating antique and fine art prints, and gives the essential basics for collectors, sellers, historians, students and art enthusiasts.

Along with learning how to identify etchings, engravings, lithographs, photoengravings, woodcuts and other processes, topics include identifying and dating paper, how to identify modern reproductions and forgeries, alterations, proofs, editions, states, provenance, how to research the works of famous artists, and offers a plethora of practical tips.

'The Dinner Horn' 1870 Harper's Weekly wood-engraving based on a sketch by Winslow Homer

1800s lithograph celluloid advertising pin

1899 lithograph advertising poster

(1)
Identifying Antique Commercial Printing Processes: Introduction

The upcoming articles will look at how to identify the standard antique commercial printing processes used to make everything from trading cards to advertising posters to publications to postcards.

There are two main reasons for wanting to able to identify the processes. One is connoisseurship. As a hobbyist, enthusiast or weekend museum visitor, it is good and enjoyable to say “This is an engraving” and ”That's a lithograph,” and know how the items were made. As a seller, it is important for business to be able to tell customers the type of print you are selling.

Relief printing: Ad for 1926 Red Grange football movie

The other reason for wanting to be able to identify the antique processes is authentication. Identifying and dating the printing is 60 percent of authentication. When someone hands me a questioned

postcard or calendar and sees me put it under a microscope, I am identifying the printing process and dating the ink. If you can identify and date the printing processes you will be a smart buyer. You will be confident that $1,000 poster is indeed old and will have no trouble weeding out the average modern reprint.

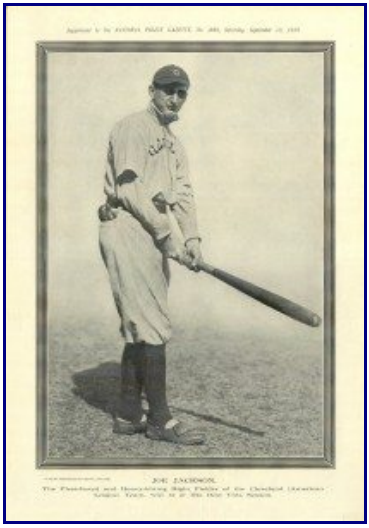
Lithography: 1800s Sweet Caporal cigarettes ad sign

How printing processes are identified

Process are identified by their general appearance (an engraving simply looks different than a woodcut, and you can tell the difference when they're hung on the wall across the room), the areas of use (for examples, early 1900s magazine pictures are usually photoengravings, while silent movie posters and tobacco cards are usually lithographs), naked eye details (gloss, indentations from the printing press, other) and details revealed only under magnification.

You don't need a laboratory to identify printing processes. If you have a loupe or inexpensive pocket microscope on you, you can judge the type and age of printing at a garage sale or in a friend's living room. Heck, you may one day go to a museum and see they've mislabeled a

work of art hung on the wall. This has happened to me, where a major art museum misidentified Paul Gauguin prints hung on the wall. I could tell with my naked eyes they got it wrong. You'll know you're an advanced collector when you're correcting museums.



Photoengraving: 1913 Police Gazette Supplement of Shoeless Joe Jackson

The chapters in this book will be:

2: Relief prints (page 12) which include woodcuts, wood-engravings and photoengravings. This class of printing was widely used to make Harper's woodcuts, many trading cards, premiums, ad signs and publications
3: Intaglio (page 26) a general class of printing that includes engravings and etchings.
4: Antique lithography (page 43), which was used to make many trading cards, tobacco and other ad posters and signs.
5: Miscellaneous processes (page 59), including photogravure, collotype, gilding and embossing. These were used to make many movie ads, postcards, book plates and collectible prints.
6: Modern half-tone reproductions of antique prints (page 75). A quick way to identify modern reprints.

A tool for this book: the microscope.

This books discusses looking at prints at the microscopic level and shows many microscopic images. It is recommended you pick up a microscope of at least 50x power. You can find many very inexpensive pocket models online, including on eBay and amazon.com.

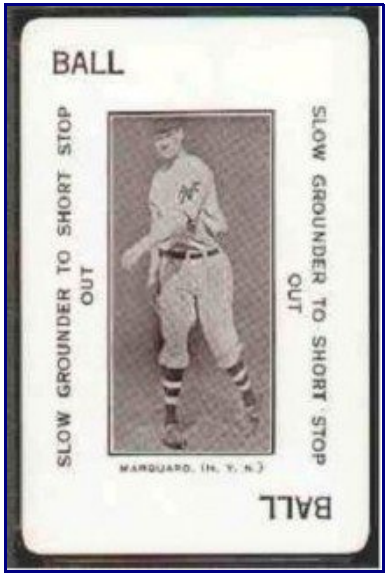
The above is a standard handheld style

This is an inexpensive digital microscope that plugs into the computer. The image appears on your screen and you can take microscopic photos.

(2)
Antique Printing Processes
Identification: Relief Prints

Relief printing

Relief printing is a major-general category of printing and history's oldest. It includes woodcuts or woodblock printing, wood-engraving type setting and photoengraving, and was used to make a wide variety of antique memorabilia and collectibles including Harper's woodcuts, trading cards, magazines and books, premiums, advertising posters, postcards and tickets. Relief was printing particularly popular with book and magazine publishers.



Relief printing, such as used to make this 1913 baseball card, has been used commercially for decades.

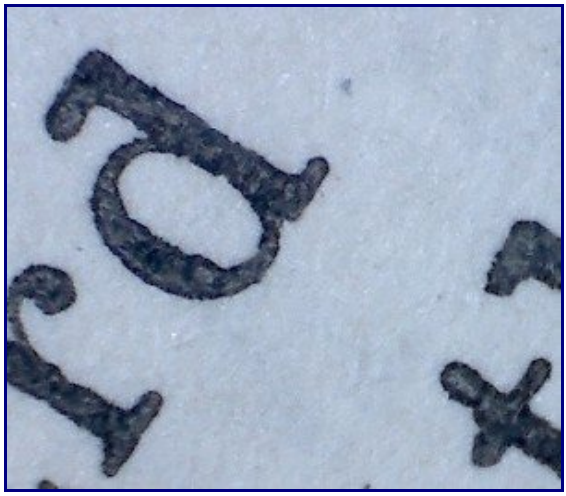
The key for antique memorabilia collectors is, while relief printing was once a widely used form of commercial printing, it was discontinued from commercial several decades ago. The vast majority of commercially made prints in the past forty plus years have been lithographs or, in more recent years, digital prints. This means if you can identify an old-looking trading card, advertising poster, publication, postcard or other commercially produced print as a relief print that is strong evidence, and sometimes almost definitive proof it is indeed old.

What is a relief print?
A relief print is what most people of think of as printing. A relief print is made by cutting away part of the surface of the printing plate, adding ink to the raised surface that is left and pressing the plate surface to the paper or card stock. The area that was cut away will not appear on the paper, while the inked area that was left will.

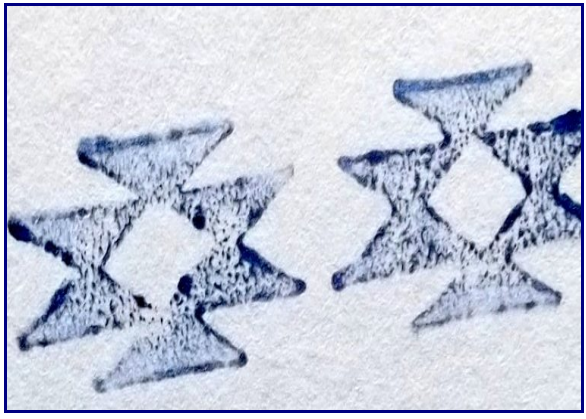
If you take a block of wood, carve your initials into it, ink it up and press it on a piece of paper, you have made a relief print. Everything but your initials will appear on the paper. If you had instead cut away everything except your initials, it would print just your initials.

A rubber stamp is an example of a relief print. So is a linoleum cut you made in art class and an old typewriter typed letter.

How to identity relief prints with a microscope
Due to the way that relief prints are made, the ink has a distinct look under the microscope. The printing often has a dark rim around the edge of the ink. In cases, this can be seen with the naked eye or ordinary magnifying glass. In most cases, a microscope is needed. The dark rim is caused by the pressure of the printing plate against the paper pushing the excess ink to the edge.



Relief letters on a World War I print show the distinct dark rim around the graphics under strong magnification



The dark rim around the letters a rubber stamp. In this case the rim can be seen with the naked eyes.

This rim appears on all types of relief prints. In relief printing the ink is most apparent on smooth, glossy paper. If the paper is rough, such as with newsprint or hand-made paper, the rim may not be as noticeable.

The only non-relief print that sometimes has a similar rim is early

chromolithography, a colorful form of lithography discussed in a later section. However, this rim in chromolithography is cause by the settling of the thin lithographic ink and will appear more irregular than mechanical. Also, this chromolithography is itself an antique process, so, whichever the source, the dark rim points to the print being old.

As a relief print is made by the pressure of the printing plate against the printing surface, some relief prints will have an embossment on the back of the paper. This can often be felt with the fingertips and seen, such as on old typed letters. If the paper is thick or there is printing on the back, such as with the pages of a book, the embossment may not be apparent.

The main types of relief prints

WOODCUT OR WOODBLOCK PRINTS

Detail of a woodcut print revealing how the wood block was carved by hand

The relief print called woodcut (or woodblock) is both the name for the printing process and the print itself. The artist or craftsman carves the design into the plank side of the wood using chisels, gouges and similar tools. The woodcut is an ancient form of printing, used in ancient China. It flourished in Europe after the 14th century. During the 17th and 18th century the Japanese made influential woodcuts. Woodcuts were used in for many 1700s and early 1800s book,

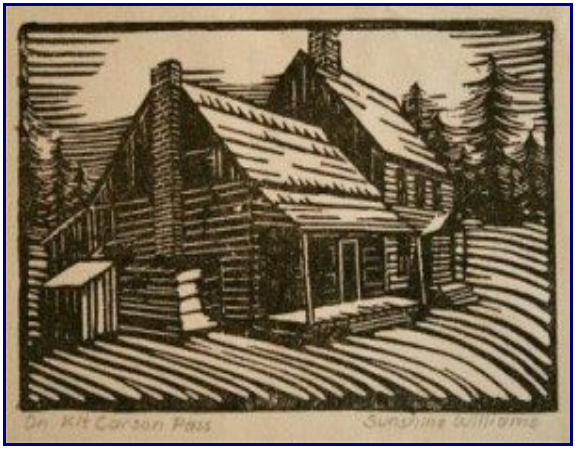
magazine, poster and advertisement illustrations, and will have a simple, crude look. The woodcut was commonly used for commercial prints until the mid 1800s, when it was replaced by wood-engraving, a finer type of woodcut. The woodcut has been used by many famous artists, including Albrecht Durer, Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali.

Identification of woodcut prints

Along with the dark rim around the ink that is typical to relief printing, the woodcut is identified because of the distinct and often primitive lines.The white areas are the result of the wood being scooped from the block. If you can imagine the white areas being scooped out, then this is a strong indication it is a woodcut.

Due to the natural irregular shape of the wood, neither the woodcut nor the wood-engraving can print large areas of solid ink without showing the grain or irregular shape of the wood. To simulate large areas of solid color, a series of parallel or cross-hatching lines was made. These lines will appear as white light lines against the area of otherwise solid ink.

Also, as already, mentioned, woodcut printing was used for commercial prints in the 1800s and earlier. The era of the item would help identify it as a wood cut.



This antique woodblock print has the distinct look from the graphics being carved and chiseled in the block of wood the print was printed from.

1700s woodcut from a pamphlet showing the simple, almost primitive lines

LINOLEUM CUT

Detail of a Pablo Picasso linoleum cut print, closely resembling a woodcut.

Though not an antique process and almost never used for mass production commercial purposes, the linoleum cut, also known as linocut and linoleum block, is mentioned here as it's a common process and one many of us have used. Through introduced at the beginning of the 1900s, it was not popularized with artists until Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse used it in the 1950s. Since then, it has been commonly used by artists.

The linoleum cut is made the same as a woodcut, except a block of linoleum is used instead of wood. Linoleum is cheap and, unlike wood, soft and easy to cut. Many of us have made linoleum cuts in school or at home. As linoleum is easier to cut, a linocut can have many different effects, lines and squiggles not possible with woodcuts.

Linoleum cuts often look like woodcuts. It is sometimes difficult to tell if a print is linoleum cut or a woodcut. As with most relief prints, the linocut has a noticeable rim around the ink. Due to the smooth surface of the linoleum, linoleum cuts can print large areas of solid ink. This is unlike the woodcut, which cannot print large areas of solid ink.

WOOD-ENGRAVING

1800s Harper's Wood-Engraving

Wood-engraving is a form of woodcut that largely replaced the woodcut for mass production commercial purposes in the mid 1800s. It was the common way to make pictures for newspaper and magazines until the 1890s when it was slowly replaced by photoengraving. In the fine arts, wood-engravings are still made today.

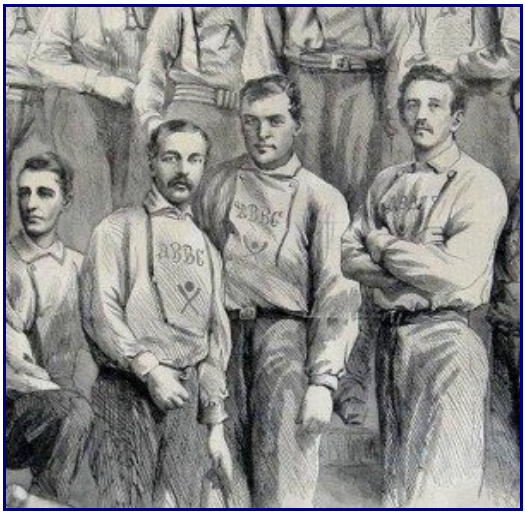
A harder wood is used than with the woodcut, and the artist carves

across the grain of the wood (end-grain). This allows for finer and more detailed lines on the block of wood and in the resulting print.

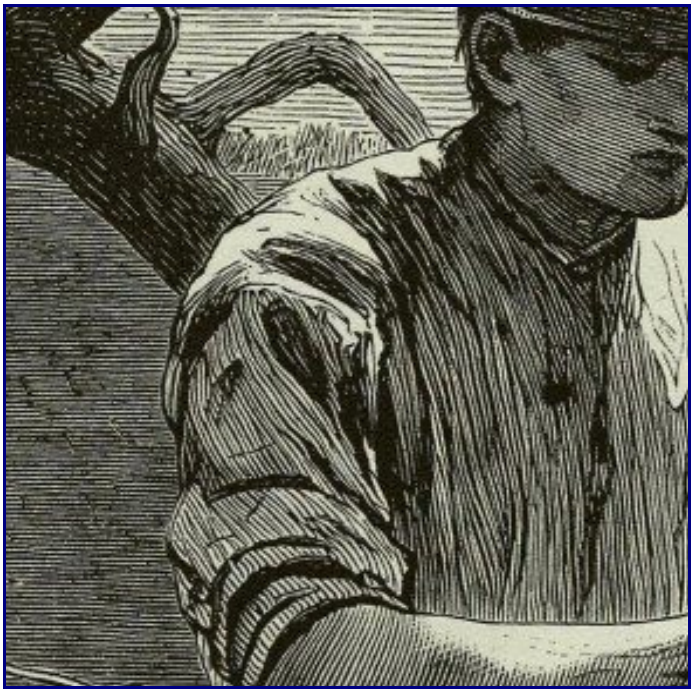
Identification of wood-engravings:
As with all relief prints, the wood engraving has the hard rim around the ink that can be viewed under the microscope and sometimes with the naked eye. It sometimes has an embossment on the back of the print caused by the printing pressure. The wood-engraving can closely resemble the woodcut in general appearance, except that the wood-engraving is more detailed with finer lines. If the white line is thin and delicate, it is most probably a wood-engraving instead of a woodcut. It was not possible to create such a fine line in the woodcut.

Due to the natural irregular shape of the wood, neither the woodcut or wood-engraving could print large areas of solid ink without showing the grain of the wood. To simulate large areas of solid color, a series of parallel or cross-hatching lines was often made.

As already mentioned, wood-engraving was used commercially in the mid to late 1800s. The date of an item will help identify the process.



Detail of an 1866 Harper's Weekly wood-engraving showing how they are made up of fine lines and often resemble a pen and ink sketch. Harper's and other late 1800s publications commonly had wood-engraving pictures.



An even better look at the typical lines in an 1800s wood-engraving

METAL CUT AND RELIEF ETCHING

There are various hand made relief methods that use metal instead of wood. The most frequent method is to cut a metal plate in the same way as cutting wood. This was frequently done from the fifteenth to nineteenth century often for decorations, such as border designs in for book illustrations. With some early prints it is impossible to determine whether a print was made by wood or metal.

In the fifteenth century, the outline of the design was often engraved, then the area within stamped and punched. These are called **manière criblée** or **'in the dotted manner'** and have a distinct, primitive look and are decorated with tiny 'in the dotted manner' dots and tiny stars. This type of printing was most often used many centuries ago.

The British poet and printer William Blake made the pictures for his

books using an etched metal plate printed in the relief form. The prints were either printed in color or hand-colored, and th prints have unique color variations from book to book.

Metal cuts will rarely be seen for most of the commercial and advertising printing coved in this book, but I included it here to be complete.

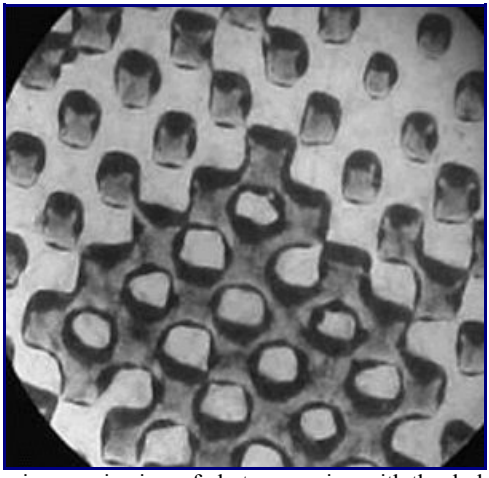
Centuries old metal cut in the dotted manner with the distinct old time look and tell tale 'in the dotted manner' dots.

PHOTOENGRAVING

Photoengraving was a common vintage commercial printing method widely used in the 1890s through the early to mid 1900s. Photoengraving was used to make the images for magazines, newspapers, advertising posters, baseball cards and commercial prints. Most early 1900s trading cards with realistic looking pictures are photoengravings, as are almost all photo realistic pictures in magazines. Photoengraved images were often used with letterpress text, such as in magazines, newspapers and books.

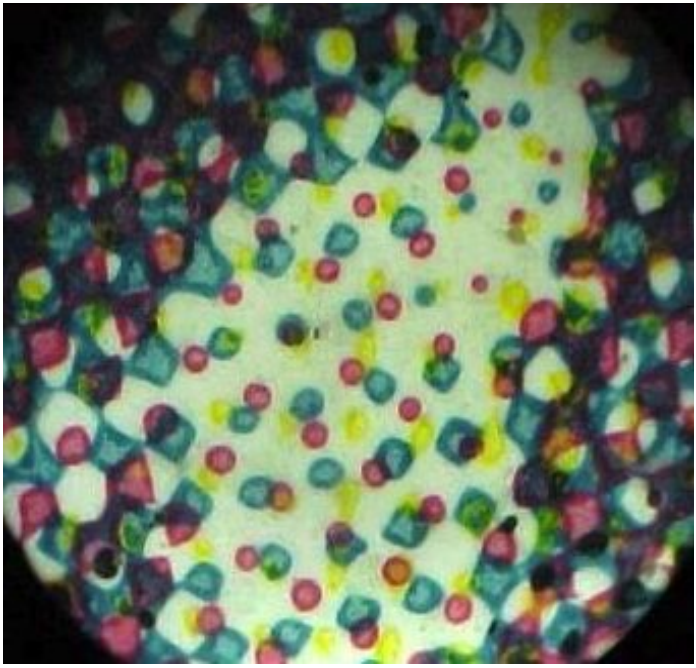
Photoengraving can reproduce both solid lines and areas of solid ink, but also reproduce photorealistic images. To reproduce the subtle tones and details of a photograph, it translated the image into a pattern of dots. As photoengraving is a relief process, it will have the dark rim around the graphics. Even the individual dots will often have the dark rim. On a relief print, check all areas for the dark rim-- the dots in the image and the solid areas of a borderline or text.

Due to the form of the printing plates, the relief dot patterns will often have little white crosses in some of the dots and also a distinct 'waffle pattern' in other areas.



microscopic view of photoengraving with the dark edge and waffle-like pattern

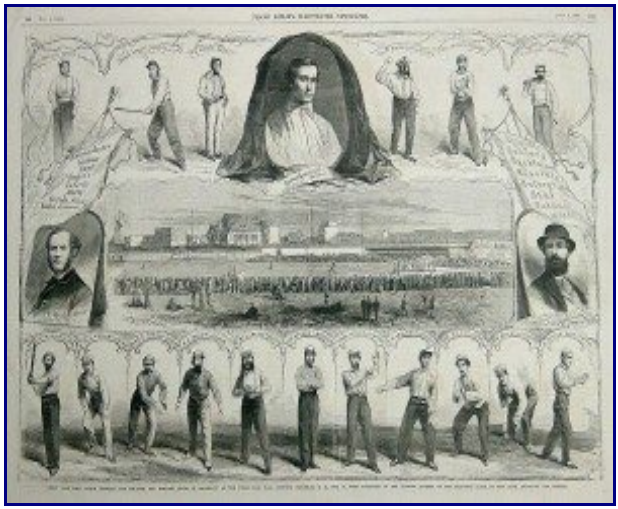
As with all relief prints, the solid lines in a photoengraving will have the dark rim



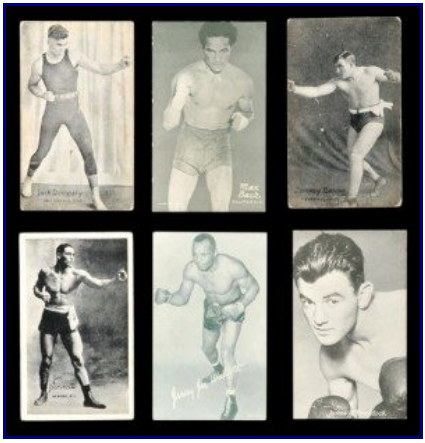
You can see dark edges in this early 1900s color photoengraving

To finish this article, a brief gallery of some relief printed collectibles

Letterpress and photoengraving: 1915 Babe Ruth Sporting News baseball card



Wood-engraving1865 Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper wood-engraving featuring early baseball star James Creighton. Harper's and Leslie's prints were part of the magazine and will have articles and text on the back and often surrounding.



1920s-30s Boxing Exhibit cards

Photoengraving: 1939 Vogue magazine

(3)
Antique Printing Processes Identification: Intaglio Prints

Engraved Czechoslovakian World Cup soccer stamp

Intaglio Prints

Normally pronounced *intalio* with a silent 'g,' intaglio is a major category of prints that includes engravings and etchings. It has been used to make fine art prints by Rembrandt, Albrecht Durer and Salvador Dali, but also many commercial and mass-produced prints including US currency, antique tickets, stock certificates, postcards and book pictures.

As with relief printing discussed in the previous installment, intaglio printing also involves cutting away part of the surface of a printing plate, which is almost always metal. The difference from relief is that the ink is placed in the lower parts, or recesses, of the plate. During the printing process it takes great pressure to get the ink from the recesses onto the paper, and prints are usually on soft matte paper.

Keys to identifying Intaglio Prints
As a general category, intaglio prints are identified by several qualities caused by the unique way they are printed. These qualities include the following:

Plate mark: Many intaglio prints have a plate mark a distance away from the printed image. These appear as a noticeable, if light, indentation larger than the printed image. Sometimes the plate mark edges are trimmed from the print. The plate mark can resemble a pressed in area such as when after a food tray is pressed into a shag rug. It is often also noticeable from the back. If you see a plate mark you can be confident the print is some form of intaglio print. The only task after seeing a plate mark is to determine which kind of intaglio it is.

In fact, if you aren't certain what kind of intaglio it is (etching? mezzotint? engraving? combination?), it's fair to simply label it an intaglio print and leave it at that.

For art-style prints there should be a plate mark, but some prints have had the edges plate mark cut off. For example, there are no plate marks on US currency even though they are engravings.

When you look closely you can see the pressed in 'plate mark' surrounding the graphics on this 1812 etching.

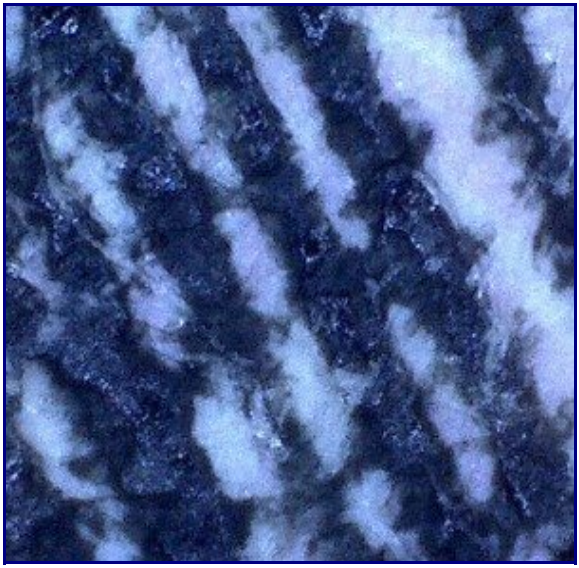
Plate mark

corner of a plate mark

Raised ink levels. Unlike with relief and lithography, the ink on an intaglio print can be physically raised from the paper. This is because the ink comes from inside the recesses of the printing plate. To make

dark areas of a print, the printing plate is cut deeper to allow thicker ink. In the lighter areas of a print, the cut in the printing plate is shallow. This means that the physical height of the ink in an intaglio is most easily detected in the areas of dark ink. Sometimes the ink can be felt by softly rubbing a finger across the printing or by looking very closely with the naked eye. In other cases, a microscope is needed. If the paper surface is rough or wrinkled, it may be difficult to identify.

Varying tone within a line: Within a single line or mark, lithography and relief can only create one tone of ink. Due to the varying levels of ink applied, the tone along an intaglio line can vary, meaning it can become darker or lighter.



Raised ink ares:Under the microscope you can see how the ink on an engraving is piled up in areas.

* * * *

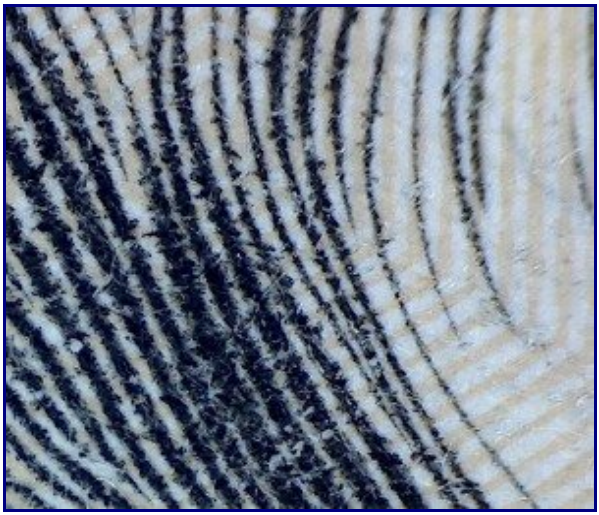
The following are the major types of intaglio prints. Each has a distinct look.

ENGRAVING

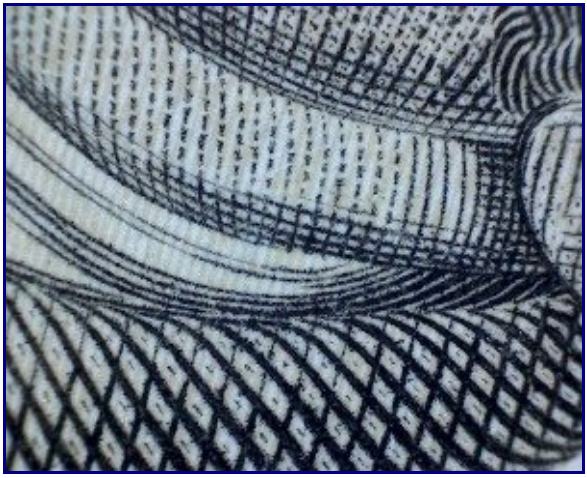
Classic example of an engraving: The US$1 bill. Engravings tend to have stoic, conservative lines and a overall formal look.

Engraving is usually made up of many parallel lines and curves. There are different ways to give an appearance of tone. One way is to lessen or increase the pressure when carving the line. This makes the line thinner in some areas and wider in others. Engraving can also have cross-hatched lines, sometimes with dots or flicked spots added to the middles of the resulting diamonds. This is called the *dot and lozenge* technique. There is also stipple engraving which is discussed later.

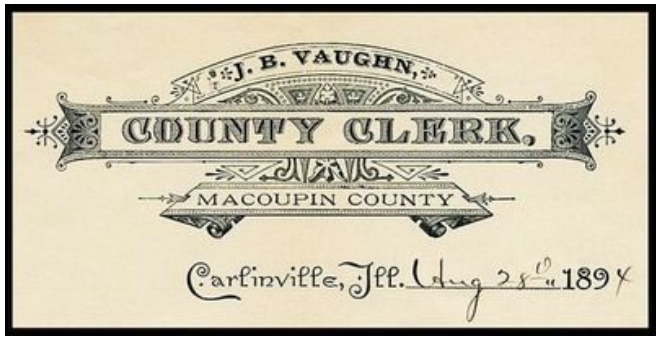
Identification of engravings. Along with the general intaglio traits (physically raised ink, plate mark. etc), engraving has a formal look created by the stoic and controlled lines.



Up close: the pointed ends common to engraving

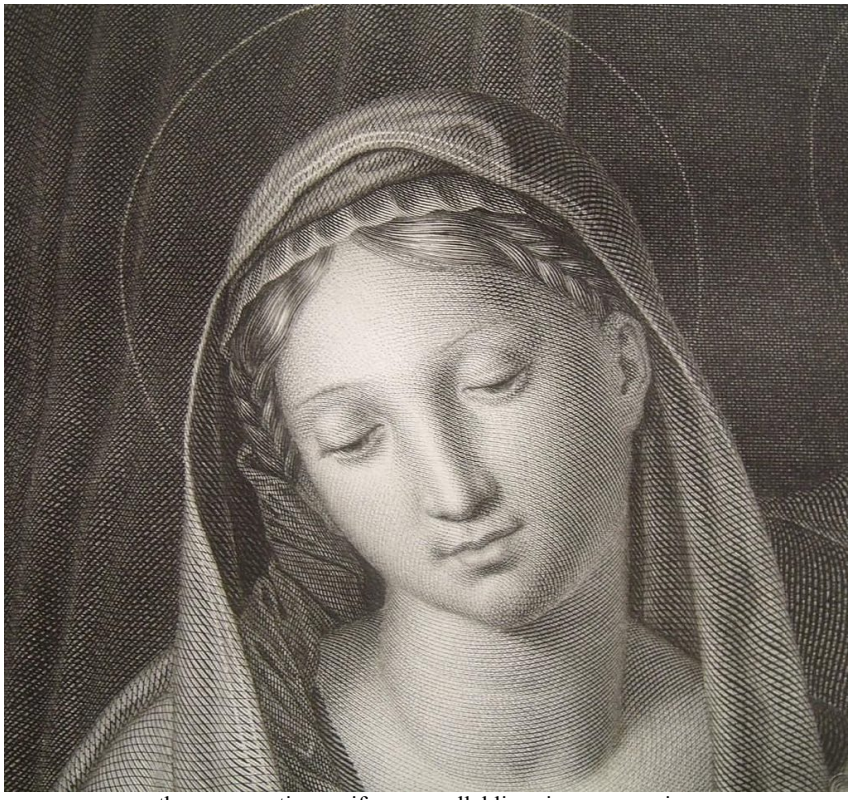


Engraving under the microscope: Parallel and orderly cross-hatching lines



typical stoic conservative lines of an engraving

the look of antique engraving



the conservative, uniform, parallel lines in an engraving

ETCHING

Etching is a form of intaglio printing that first appeared in the early 1500s. Etching was easier than engraving for the artist. With engraving, the artist has to perform the difficult task of cutting the grooves into the steel plate. With etching, the artist draws the art onto the plate, then acid creates the grooves in the plate. Not only does this make it easier on the artist, but the final print has a different, freer look than engraving.

Rembrandt self-portrait etching showing the free, sketch-like lines of etching

The etching process is as follows. The metal printing plate is heated and wax is rubbed over the surface to create a thin and even coating. This coating is known as the *ground*. After it is cooled and hardened, the ground is impervious to acid. If acid was poured on the ground, the plate would be unmarked. The etcher creates lines or other marks through the ground, exposing the plate in these areas. When the plate is submerged in acid, the acid will eat away those exposed areas. The longer the plate is submerged, the deeper and broader a line will become, and the darker the printed line. By varying the length of exposure of one area over another, the etcher can change the comparative darkness. Commonly, the etcher will place varnish on areas that are dark enough, preventing any more acid exposure. This is called *stopping out*. After stopping out, the unvarnished areas are exposed more, making them darker. This stopping out can be done numerous times, allowing for subtle lines. Another way to create different types of lines is to add lines in the ground after the others have already been made. The later lines will be lighter, while the earlier ones will be darker.

Etching was commonly used with other processes, including

engraving and dry point.

Identification. Along with the general intaglio traits (physically raised ink, plate mark, etc), etching has the following specific traits. While engraving is known for its stoic careful lines, etching has much more freely drawn lines. Etchings often resemble ink sketches.

Etching uses a rounded needle to make the line, and the end should be more blunt than the sharp end of an engraving. The edges of the line should be less clean than that of an engraving. The combination of the crumbling wax and acid can create uneven edges.

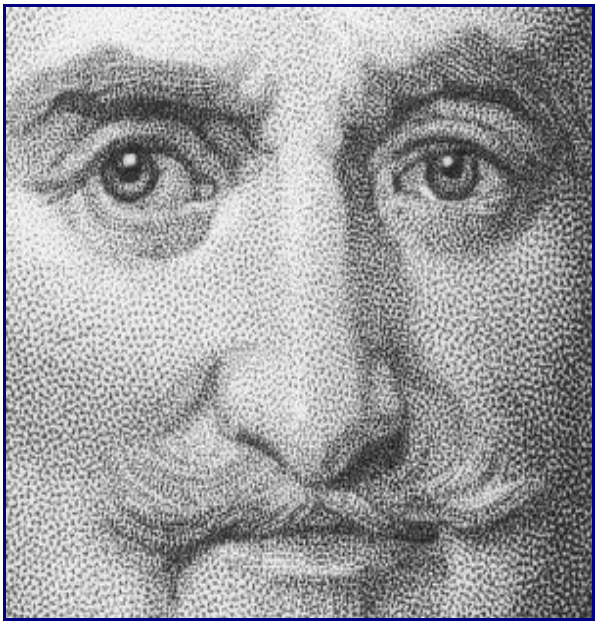
Mid 1800s etching with hand coloring. Shows the sketch-like lines. The print marks were cut off.

STIPPLE ENGRAVING, CRAYON ENGRAVING, CHALK ENGRAVING

These techniques are commonly used with engraving and etching. Similar appearing techniques were used in other process, most notably lithography. These are centuries old techniques that are still used today by artists.

Stipple. The stipple technique was first used in engraving in the 1500s, and was later used in other types of printing including etching.

Stipple engravings were especially popular around the turn of the 19th century. Stipple involves using many dots or small marks of varying size and shape to create tonal areas not possible with lines alone. Various tools could be used to make the marks in the plate. Often times both engraving and etching were used together. For example, the general design could be made with etching, then the stipple mark could be engraved. In general, the engraved stipple dot will look more like a flick, or short line, while the etched stipple mark will be more like a dot.



The dots in stipple engraving, intended to give shading and tone. Stipple was usually used only as shading, and other areas will have solid lines.

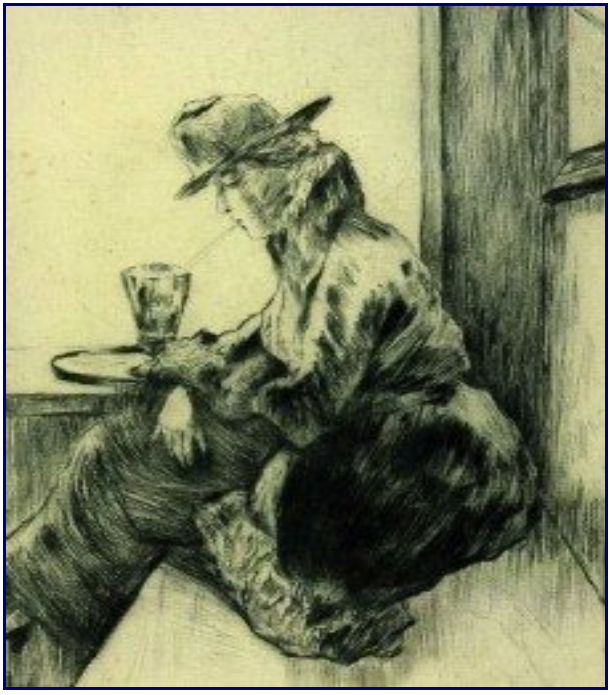
Crayon or chalk manner engravings. Though called engraving, this is more often used in etching. This technique gives the appearance of a crayon or chalk drawing. A tool called a roulette is used. The roulette is a metal wheel with sharp points that created a seemingly

random series of dots along a line, which appeared much like a chalk line. Different sized roulettes produced different effects.

Detail of a crayon and chalk engraving. It a bit resembles a chalk or crayon sketch, though the plate mark will identify it as intaglio.

DRYPOINT

Dry point is an artistic engraving method. A pointy tool scratches the design into the metal printing plate. This scratching often throws up a ridge of metal on the edges of the scratched line. This ridge is called a *burr*. When ink is added to the plate, the burr will hold ink, often giving the printed line a distinct fuzziness. This fuzziness can disappear over several printings. Due to the violent nature of the scratching into metal, the dry point line is often violent and angular. Dry point is most often used with other printmaking techniques, and was first popularized in the late 15th century and is used by modern artists.

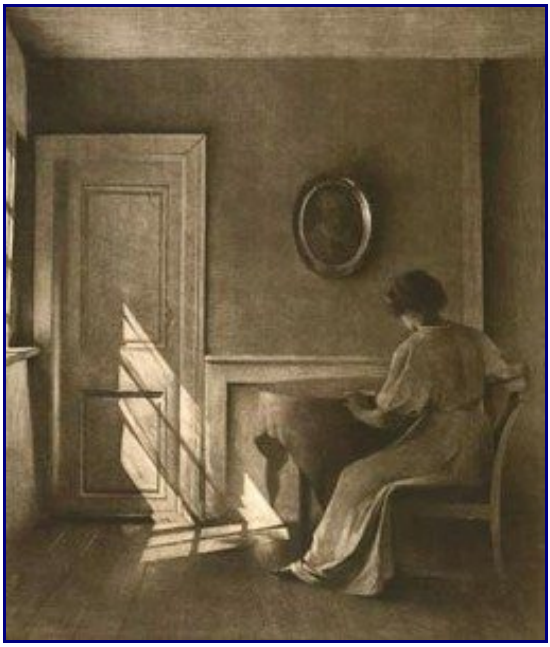


Dry point showing the distinct 'bleeding ink' look

MEZZOTINT

Also known as black manner, mezzotint is a form of intaglio printing that produces subtle and rich gradations in tone not possible with most other forms of manual intaglio. It was invented in the 1600s.

While engraving and etching can create only light or dark at a specific point, Mezzotint can create black, white and any shade in between. Mezzotints often have a rich, black velvety look. It was used alone or with other intaglio prints. For example, etching may be used to create the basic outline, while mezzotint is used to create the shading.



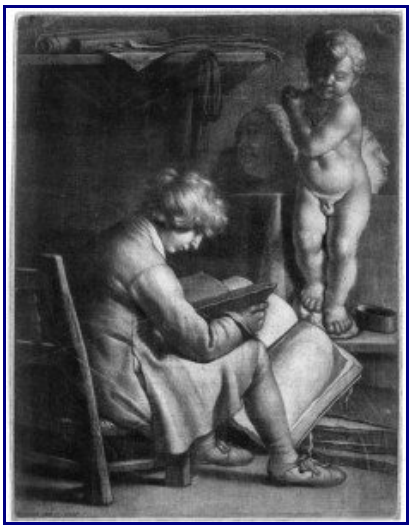
The rich, velvety tones of a mezzotint

The printing plate is created by pricking the surface with many, many tiny holes that hold ink, and make large areas of dark tone during printing. Different tools can be used to prick the plate to create the light areas. A roulette is a small wheel with sharp points that is often used to print the plate. A rocker is a tool with a toothed edge that, when cutting the plate, creates rough edges. These edges are called burs. The burs are scraped away in places intended to be white in the finished print.

The mezzotint is identified by the thin and often cross- hatching lines in the grey tones. These are made from the scraping of the toothed tool. These lines also appear at the edges of the print. The mezzotint will typically have plate marks and raised ink levels typical to intaglio prints. Early mezzotint plates were prone to heavy wear. This means that later prints can be substantially lighter than earlier ones.

Closeup detail of a mezzotint showing cross-hatching lines.

In the twentieth century new methods have been used. Many of these look like old mezzotints, but lack the richness and do not have the just described lines in the grays.

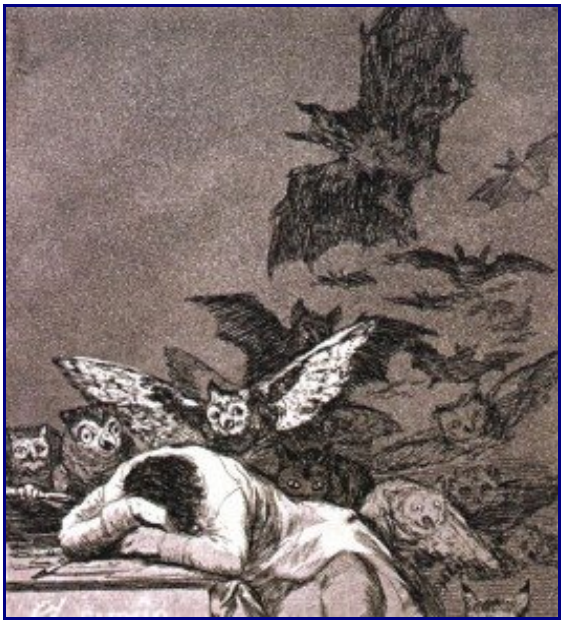


An early mezzotint showing the distinct dark-to-light tonal qualities

AQUATINT

Antique aquatint of a baseball game

Aquatint is a variety of etching techniques used by printmakers to make a wide range of tonal effects. The prints often resemble wash sketches. The technique consists of exposing the metal printing plate to acid through a layer of granulated resin or sugar. The acid bites away the metal only in the spaces between the resin or sugar grains, leaving an evenly pitted surface that creates broad areas of tone when the plate is printed. An infinite number of tones can be achieved by exposing various parts of the plate to acid baths of different strengths for different periods of time. Etched or engraved lines are often used with aquatint.



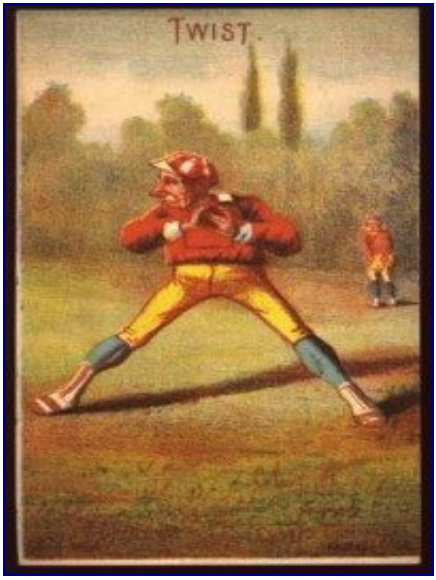
Aquatint by the famed artist Goya

Summary of Intaglio Prints

Many intaglio prints are identified by the distinct plate marks around the images. For many collectors identifying that it is an intaglio (as opposed to a lithograph or relief print) is enough. Most intaglio prints are etchings and engravings, with their distinct looks. Engravings have a stoic, conservative look, while etching have the free form lines of sketches. Drypoints have sharp, jagged lines and ink bleed, while mezzotints and aquatints have tones and shading. The processes can sometimes be combined together in prints, which is also a reason why people often use the generic 'intaglio' label. Intaglio is an old time form of printing that only skilled printers and artists can make. Identifying an otherwise old looking print as an intaglio helps identify it as antique.

(4)
Antique Printing Processes Identification: Color Lithography

This article is on 19th and early 20th color lithography which was used to make everything from tobacco cards and postcards to silent movie posters and advertising signs, and is known for its beautiful colors and vivid graphics. Happily for collectors, early color lithography is easy to identify.

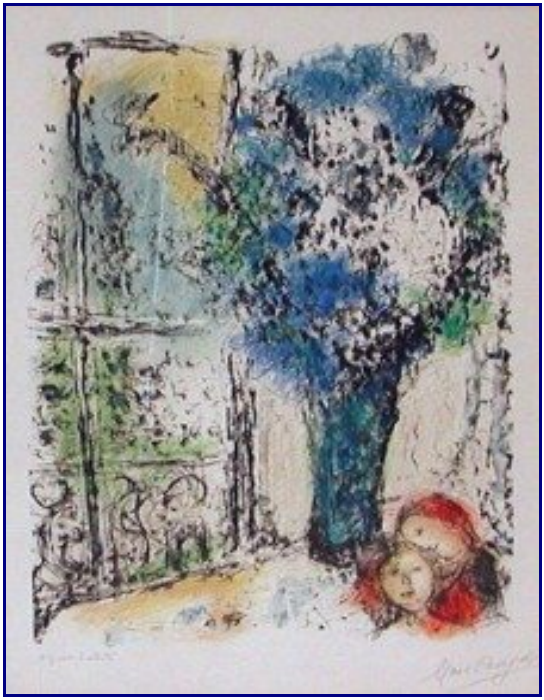


1870x baseball trade card resembling a chalk sketch

1800s 'handmade' color lithography
1800s color lithography, sometimes called by the nickname chromolithography, was used to print a variety of the most beautiful

antique prints collectables. The key is to realize is that these prints were made before the modern half-tone 'dot' lithography used to make modern trading cards and reprints. The technique of reproducing painting or photograph into that fine pattern on dots you see on a modern baseball card or magazine picture didn't exist for 1800s lithography.

The lithographs in the 1800s were 'handmade,' meaning the designs on the printing plates were made by hand and hand-held tools. This is the same by hand way famous artists such as Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall made their original lithographs that hang in museums. An 1800s Allen & Ginter baseball card or 1870s advertising poster is as much an original work of art as an original Rembrandt print.



Original handmade lithograph by famed French artist Marc Chagall

As far as identifying handmade lithographs, that the graphics were made by hand means the resulting print closely resemble paintings or

color sketches, both at the naked eye level and even under the microscope.

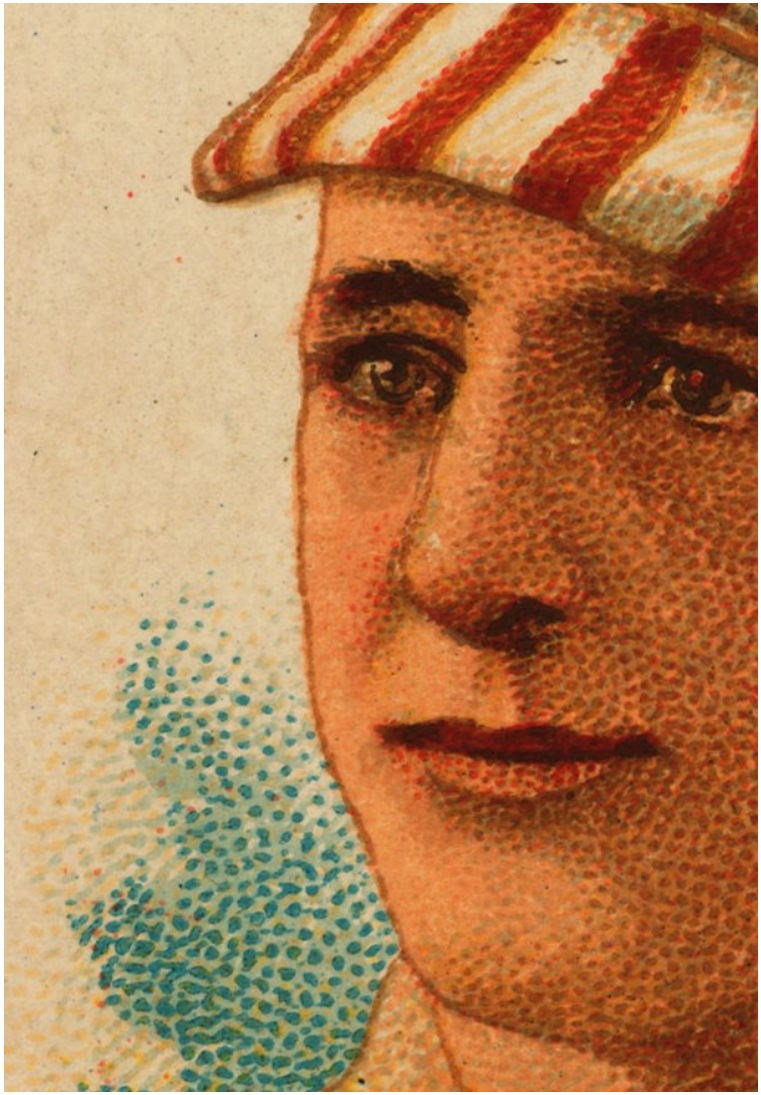
1800s lithography comes in different styles, depending on the taste of the artist and that tools used. Many resemble watercolor or gouache paintings, even up close up and under a magnifying glass. Some resemble crayon or chalk sketches, even up close and under a magnifying glass.

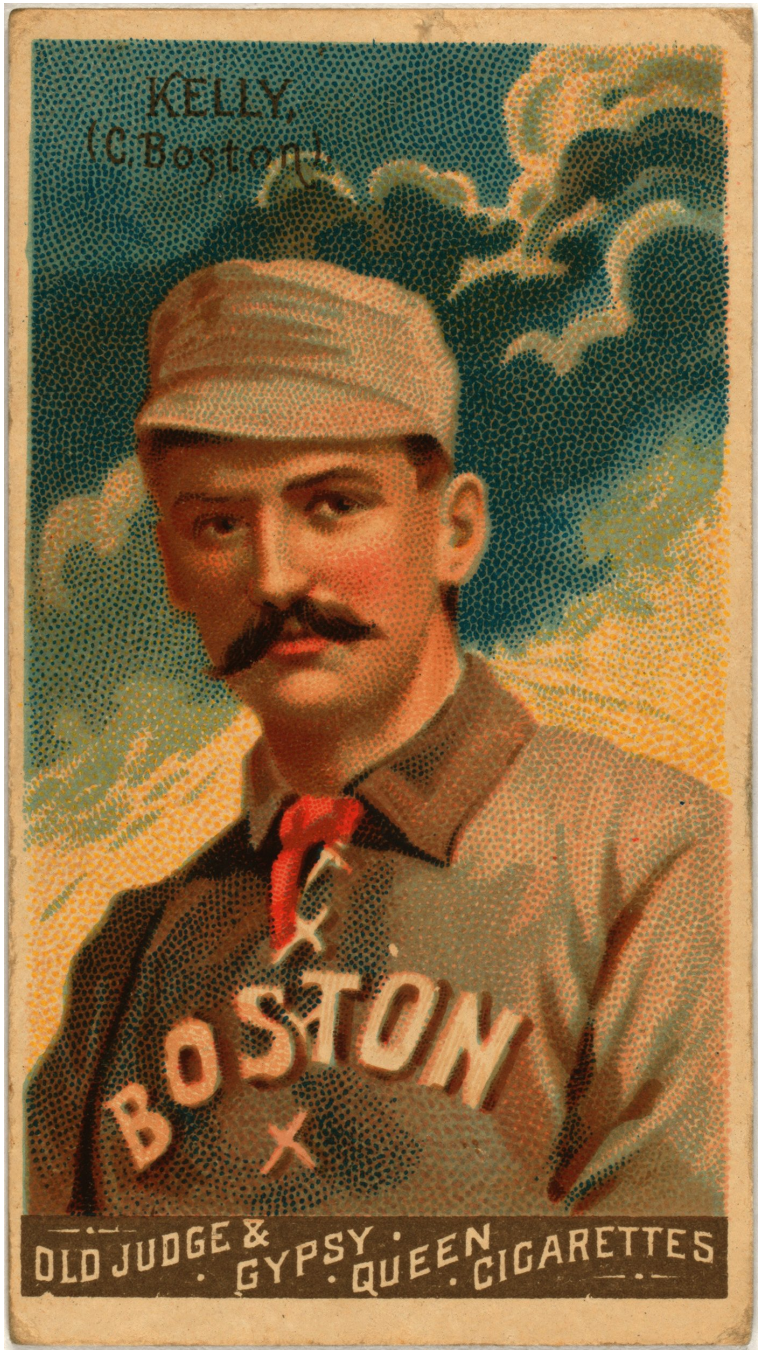
Many antique tobacco cards are lithographs

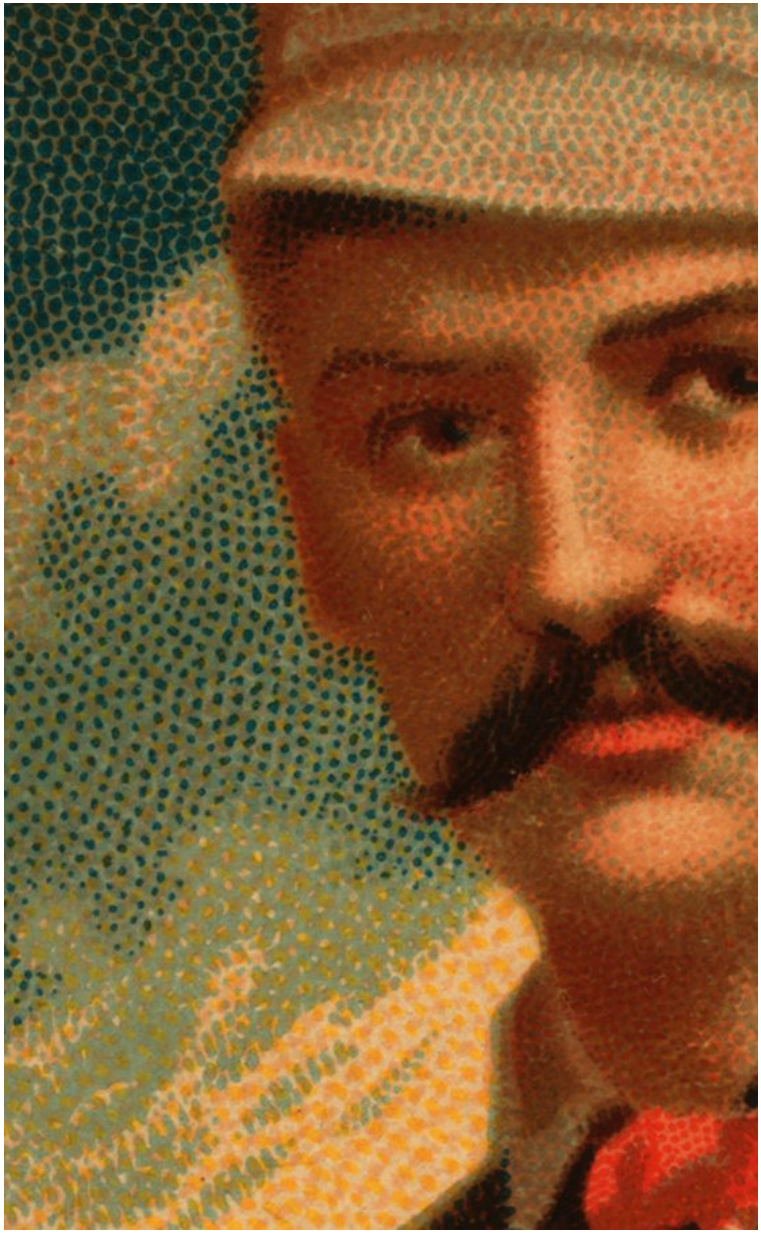
The designs sometimes have 'stipple' dots for shading. These dots were added onto the printing plate by hand or hand roller. They key is, unlike the complete dot pattern on a modern reprint or baseball card, the dots were added here and there, often for tone and shading. Up close they look as if they were added by hand, as if on a painting or color pen sketch.

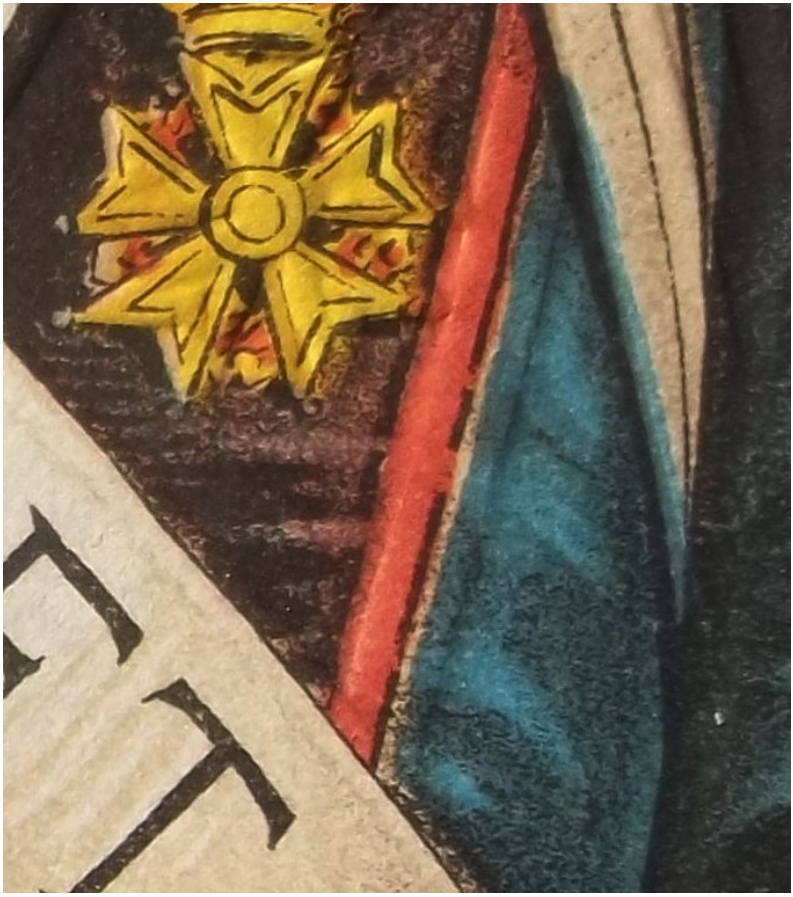
Look at the following images of 1880s tobacco cards to see that, even up close, the 1800s lithography resembles paintings or sketches. Notice how there are the stipple dots in some areas, but solid colors and solid lines in areas. Looking at these images you will see what real handmade lithography looks like and won't have trouble identifying it.


CHARLES COMISKEY.
ALLEN & GINTER'S
Cigarettes.
RICHMOND. VIRGINIA.



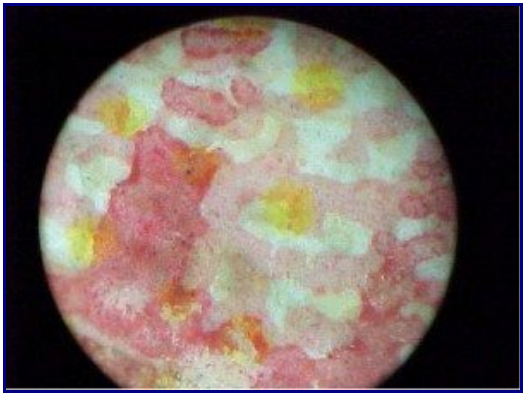

KELLY,
(C. Boston)
BOSTON
OLD JUDGE & GYPSY QUEEN CIGARETTES



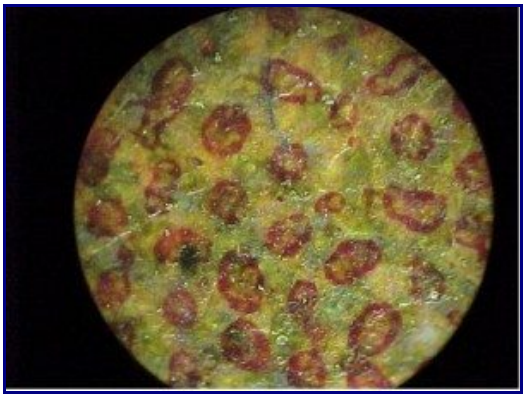


Closeup of that Sweet Caporal die cut sign shown in the first chapter. Resembles a painting or a colored sketch. A modern reproduction would be easily identified by a fine dot pattern as shown in chapter 6.

As the following two microscopic pictures show, even under the microscope the handmade lithographs resemble watercolor paintings. The watery lithography ink settled similar to watercolor paint, settling darker in areas and often creating an irregular dark rim at the edges:



1880s lithography under the microscope

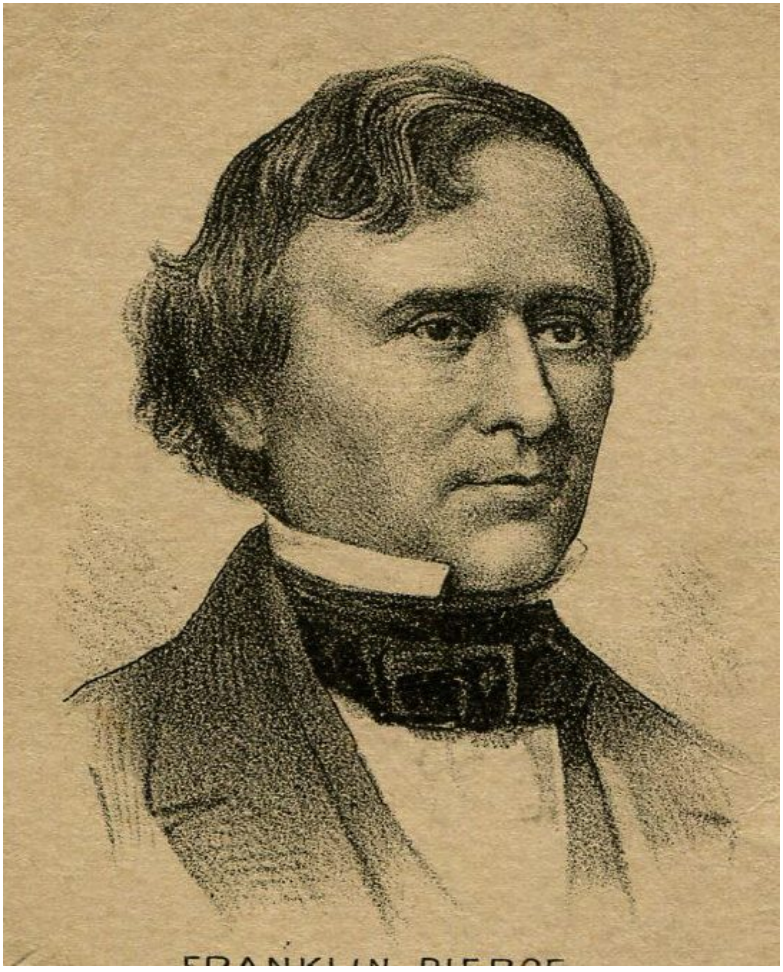


notice the irregular shapes and dark rim around the edges

The following two pictures show the handmade lithography on an early 1900s movie poster. In this case the lithography resembles a charcoal sketch, even up close.

Handmade lithography closeup

An even closer look at the movie poster

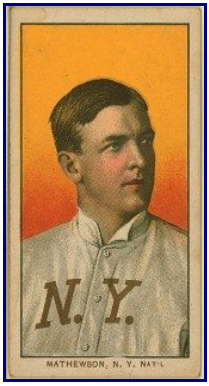


Chalk style lithography on an 1800 trading card

Lithography was versatile and could print on metal, cloth, silk, metal and other materials.

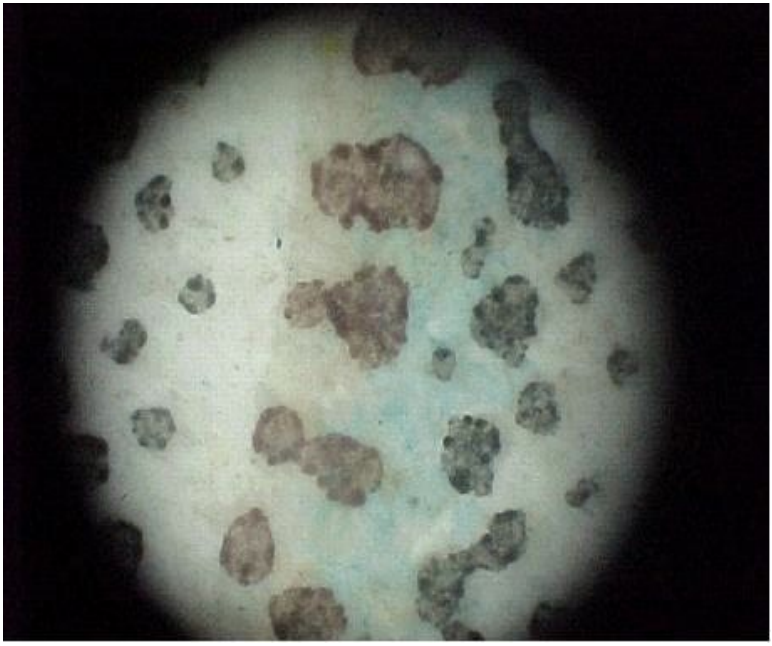
Early 1900s Color Lithography

While many early 1900s lithographs were still handmade the 1800s way, and artist continued to made handmade prints, the the half-tone or 'dot pattern' printing process was introduced in the early 1900s. As already mentioned, the half-tone or 'dot process' is the printing method of reproducing graphics into that fine pattern of color dot you see in a modern magazine or trading card images. However, early 1900s halftone lithography is distinctly different looking than modern halftone lithography and is easy to identify.



1909-11 T206 Christy Mathewson tobacco card

In this early halftone printing, there is a dot pattern but under the microscope the dots are much more irregular. As with 1800s lithography, the ink was thin and watery and, under the microscope, the printing also closely resembles a watercolor painting. For many early trading card halftone prints, such as the famous 1909-11 T206 baseball cards, there were was only a black dot pattern in areas and not in others, and many colors were added in solid in. Up close, and in particular under the microscope, these early 1900s halftone lithographs are easy to differentiate from the fine multicolored dot pattern of a modern halftone lithograph.



Notice the irregular patter, thin watery ink consistency and irregular borders to the ink.

Detail of the baseball card showing some areas of dots and some areas of solid color.

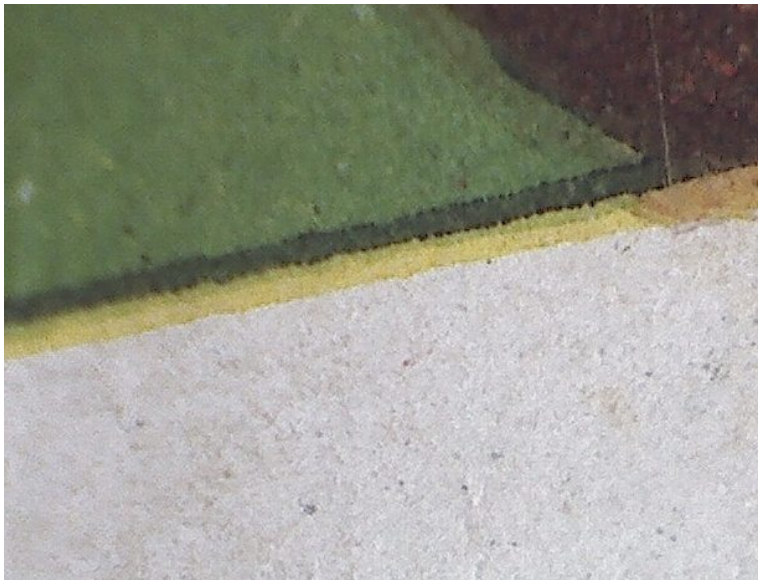
The dark edge common to early color lithography. If the paper is rough textured, this rim may not be viewable.

The dark edge to the letters on an early 1900s tobacco card

Off registration of colors

A common problem in the printing of early 1900s color halftone lithographs was registration. The printers had a tough time lining up the colors during the printing process. Sometimes the overlapping is slight and sometimes it is obvious in an online picture.

If the overlapping ink is solid, that's a strong sign that the card is genuine. In a cheap home computer reprint, where someone prints out a digital scan of card, it will have the tell-tale dot reproduction of the registration. From afar it may appear like genuine overlapping colors. However, upon close examination you will see the tell-tale multi-color dot pattern.



The solid colors overlapping

(5)
Antique Printing Processes Identification: Miscellaneous Processes

This article looks at miscellaneous printing and non-printing processes found with antique prints.

COLLOTYPE (Also known as Albertype, artotype, helioptype)

Collotype was a commercial printing process commonly used in the 1800s and early 1900s to reproduce photographs and art. It is still sometimes used in the fine arts.

Collotype lobby card for a Mary Pickford silent movie. Lobby cards were large cards like mini posters which were displayed in theater lobbies.

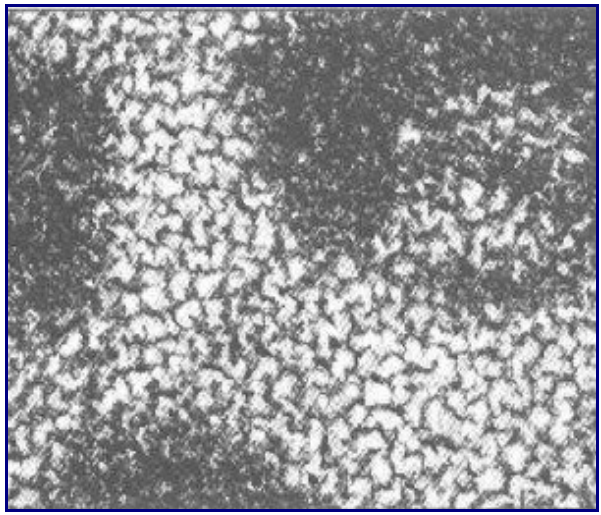
It was commonly used to make antique photorealistic postcards and

movie theater lobby cards. The Albertype Company made many collotype postcards with the company name printed on back.

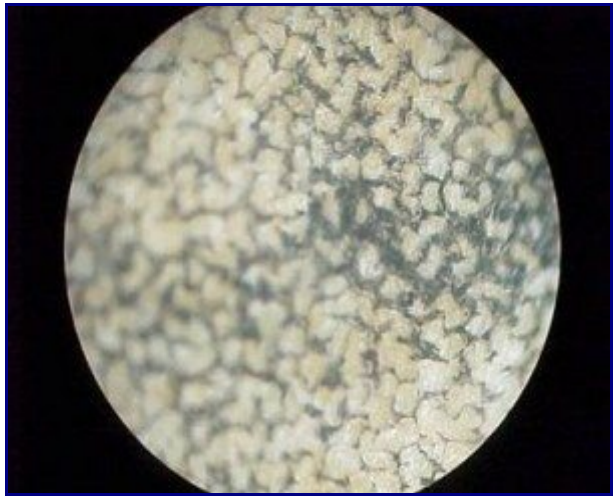
Collotypes usually have a light tan or black-and-white tone and a matte surface, though a few are varnished. Under the microscope they have a distinct reticulated pattern, appearing like a mosaic with similar size pieces of irregular shapes. It often resembles a bunch of noodles.

While the collotype has been used over many years, if you find a seemingly old print, photo or postcard that is identified as a collotype that is consistent with it being vintage.

Albertype Co. collotype Baseball Hall of Fame postcard of Babe Ruth



Collotype pattern under the microscope



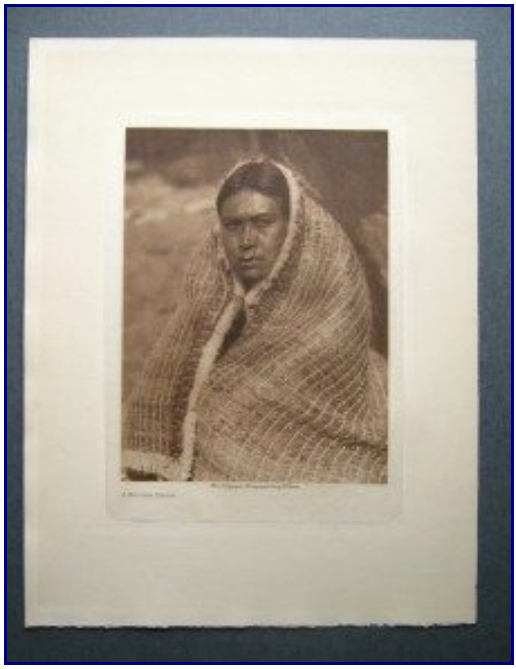
Collotype under the microscope, resembling a bowl of macaroni noodles.

PHOTOGRAVURE (aka rotogravure, roto, gravure)

Rotogravure pictorial section from a 1926 newspaper. Old newspapers often featured special 'roto pictorial' sections.

Photogravure, also known as gravure and rotogravure, is a process known for its excellent image quality and detail in reproducing photographs. It was invented in the late 1800s, is still used today by fine artists, but was largely discontinued for commercial prints in the mid 1900s.

The surface is matte and the image can come in any color, though is commonly black-and-white or brown. The print was created by using heavier ink to create the dark image areas and less ink to create the light areas. Great pressure was used to squeeze the ink onto the paper, and a plate mark may exist on the paper. A plate mark appears as a pressed in area just larger than the printed image. Sometimes this mark was trimmed off. Antique photogravures sometimes have images that are faded and with foxing.

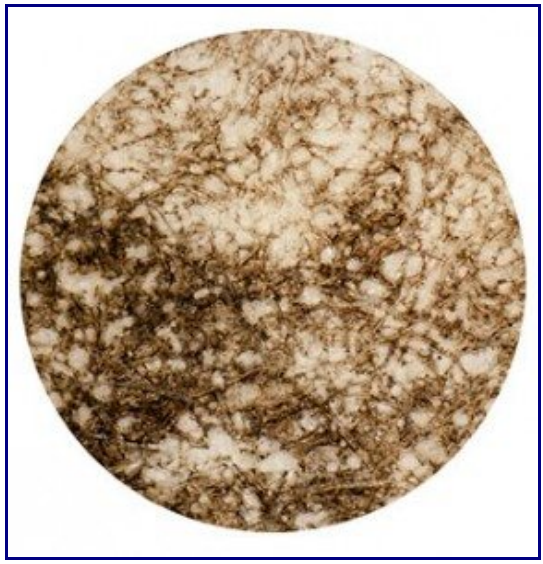


Famed Western photographer Edward Curtis made highly collectible photogravure prints of American Indians.

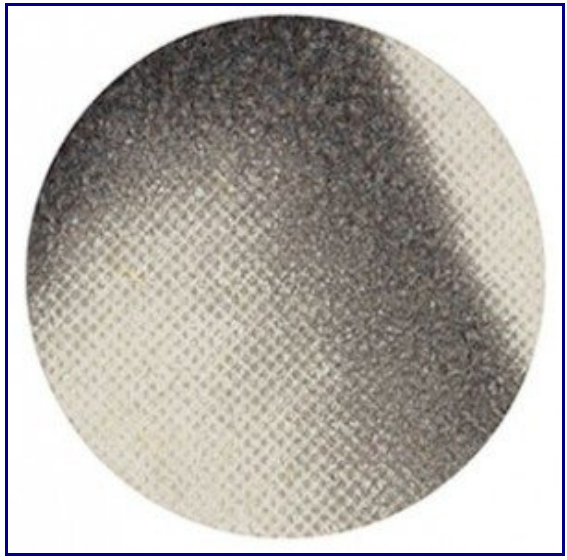
Under the microscope, an irregular, often speckled ink pattern exists.

A variation of the photogravure called the *rotary photogravure (rotogravure or roto)* was produced on a cylinder. The ink on the rotogravure image is set up in an even grid with dots of ink surrounded by intersecting white lines. This pattern is similar to that in photoengraving and photolithography but looks more like a screen or mesh.

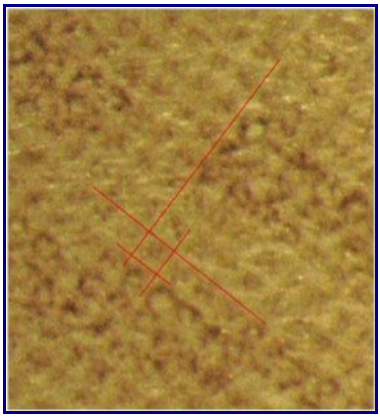
Photogravure printing was most commonly used in the old days, so gravure printing is consistent with a print being old. They were used to make art prints, premiums, photorealistic postcards and book pictures. Many old newspapers had special rotogravure picture sections, often labelled was 'rotograph' or 'roto' at the top.



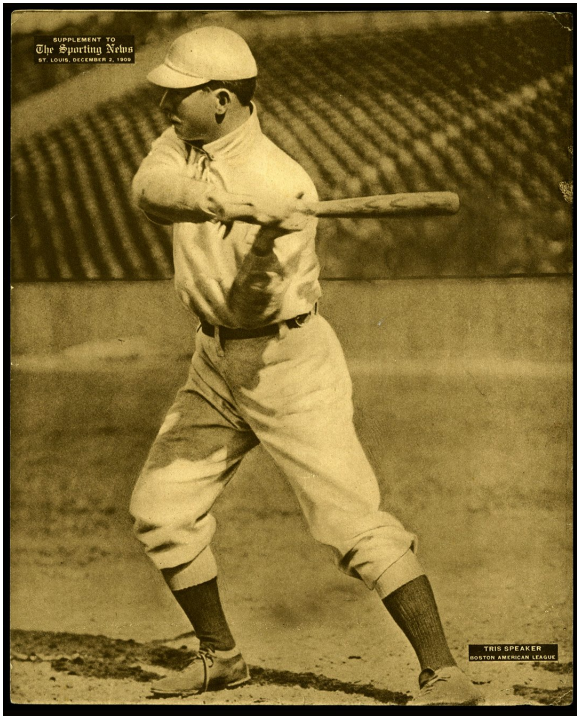
The speckled aquatint pattern under the microscope of a photgravure



Rotogravure mesh dot pattern under magnification



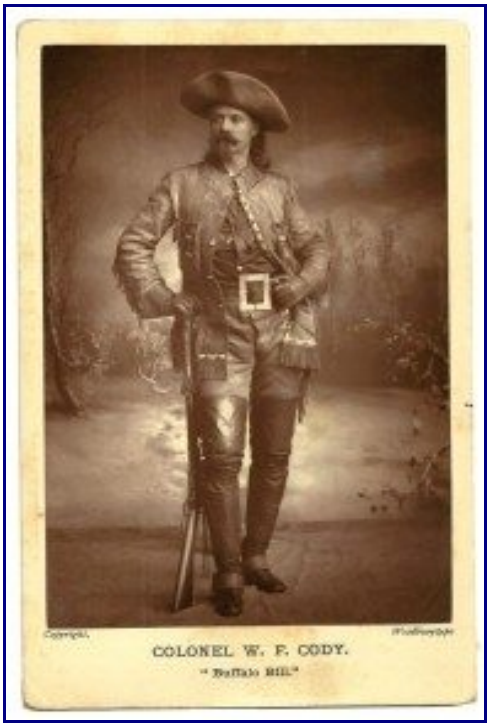
Even more magnified closeup of a rotogravure



The popularly collected early 1900s M101-2 Sporting News Supplements are of baseball players are rotogravures with the 'mesh' pattern under the microscope

WOODBURYTYPE

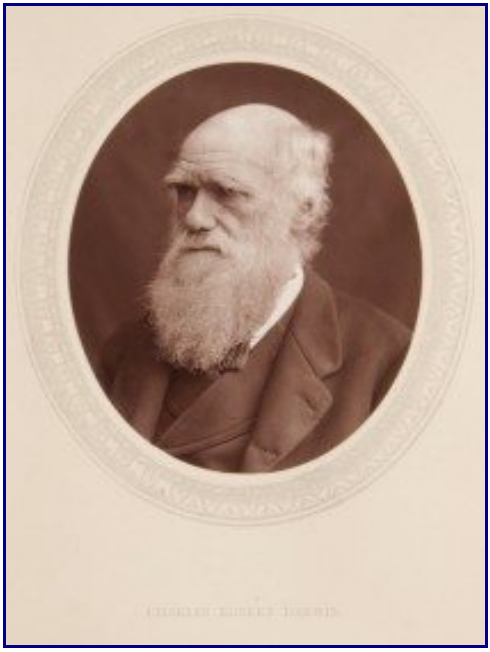
The woodburytype, called photoglyphie by the French, was an 1800s process capable of highest quality photorealistic images. Unlike other photomechanical processes, the woodburytype has no printed ink pattern even under magnification. It was most commonly used from 1870 to 1900.



Late 1800s woodburytype cabinet card of Buffalo Bill Cody. It says 'woodburytype' below the image

Most woodburytypes were book illustrations, and cannot be larger than 11" by 14." They were printed on paper then glued or mounted onto the pages. 'Woodburytype' is often printed just below the image. There are also examples of woodbury cabinet cards and CDVs, with the woodburytype print on paper pasted to the backing.

Woodbury prints lave a light relief texture in the image surface and different glosses through the image. Some parts will be at least slightly glossier than others.



Book page with an oval woodburytype picture of Charles Darwin pasted in.

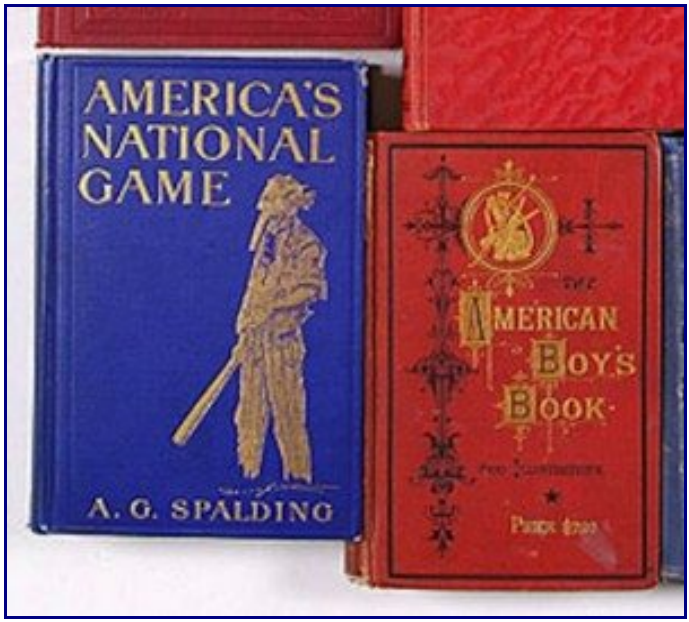
Though often mounted to larger backings, including book pages, woodburytype prints were almost always trimmed to the image area. This means they almost never will have a white border (not counting the larger mounting or backing).

There is a real photo process called the carbon print that very closely resembles the woodburytype. Luckily, it is also an antique processes, so, even if you aren't sure which it is, the print or photo is most probably antique.

GILDING

Many antique prints are embellished with gilding, which involves

metal applied in the form leaf, dust or stamping. Numerous antique trading cards (T205 baseball cards, T205 Ramlys, N172 Old Judge cabinet cards), postcards and greeting cards were gilded. Many antique books have the cover text gilded.



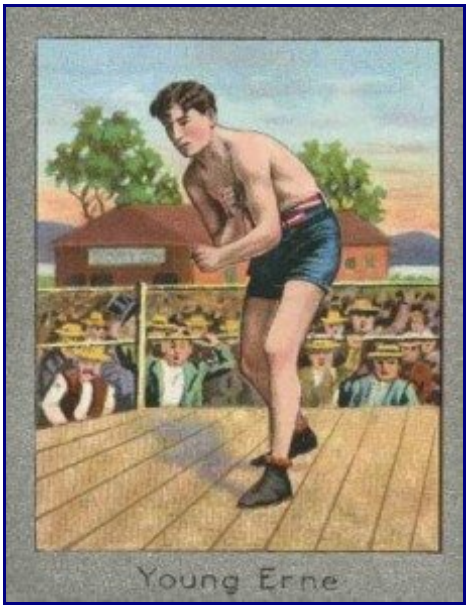
Antique baseball books with gilded letters

'Gild' literally means gold. Traditionally gold was used, but silver, aluminum, copper, bronze and other metals have been used in recent times. Remember that gold doesn't tarnish, while the commonly used copper does and often even turns greenish. Silver tarnishes black or dark brown over time.

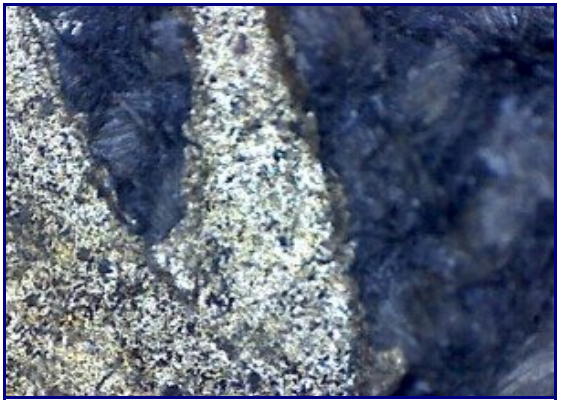
The practice of gilding is thousands of years old. Ancient Egyptian artifacts and early European religious manuscripts were gilded in real gold. Archeologists date the process to more than 2000 years before Jesus Christ.

Gilding on prints is easy to identify as it is real metal that shines like metal and that you can feel with your finger. Under the microscope you can often see the metal leaf or dust. As you might expect, gilding

is delicate and there are often areas where the metal has flaked or worn off. Real gilding like this is evidence a print is old.



1910 Mecca Tobacco 'silver borders' boxing card. The card is a lithograph with gilded borders You can tell the metal isn't real silver, because real silver tarnishes.



Microscopic photo of gold gilding on an antique book cover

SCREEN PRINTING/SERIGRAPHY/SILK SCREEN

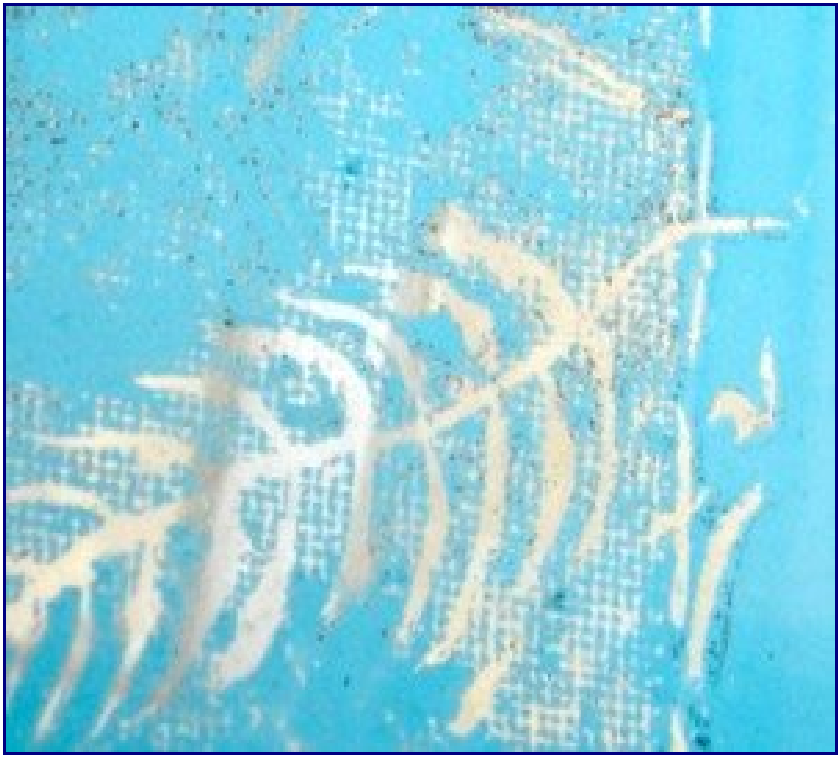
This type is a relatively recent form of printing popular in the arts and collectibles. It's been around a long time, but wasn't widely used by artists before the 1960s. Despite its modern usage, I've included it as there are many highly collectible screen prints around, including by famous artists such and Leroy Neiman, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol and Salvador Dali.

Detail of an Andy Warhol screen print showing the common bright and overlapping colors.

Screen prints are known for their bright ‘pop art’ colors and designs, often involving artistic or funky collages. Though they can involve reproduction of photographic images, they don't resemble real photographs as they don't have enough detail. A mesh is used in the printing process, and this mesh does not allow for the fineness of other prints.

The prints often have overlapping colors and are identified when there are areas of mesh patterns in the ink. The mesh pattern will

show up here and there in the print's ink and is noticeable up close. Screen prints often resemble lithographs and can be printed on many surfaces, including paper, canvas, metal, plastic and cloth.



The mesh pattern can be seen in this detail of a screen print

EMBOSSING

Some Victorian and later collectible prints we embossed. They are often colorful lithographs, with the fronts being glossy and the backs matte.

Lithograph cigar band with gilding and embossed details

HAND COLORING AND TINTING

Some antique prints, usually black and white prints, had hand tinting or hand coloring added to them. The colors in the old days were usually basic and bold and in a watercolor-type paint. Tinting means one or two added colors were added, while coloring means three or more added colors were aded.

Under magnification, the ink will be solid (not dot patterned as in a reproduction) and will be applied in varying thickness as it came off the brush. In some cases it can be hard to tell if its painted on or the handmade lithography shown earlier. Luckily, both are antique handmade processes, so both have value.

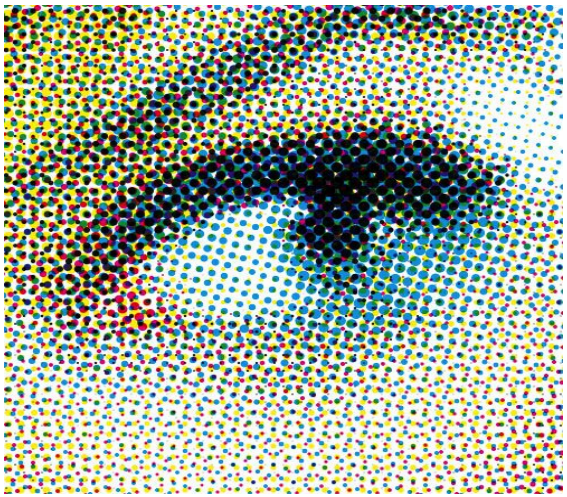

Up close of watercolor paint, showing the watery details and how the ink is applied unevenly.

Many black and white 1800s Harper's Weekly magazine were colored by hand by the owner.

Hand colored print

1860 photo with the common basic and bold hand colors

(6)
Modern Halftone Reproductions of Antiques

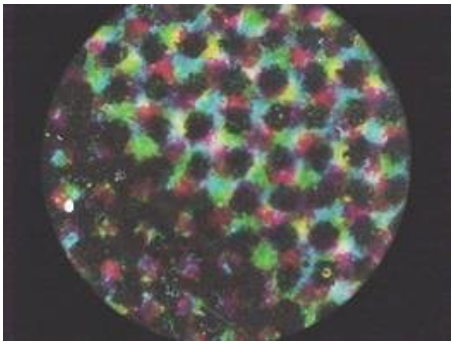


The fine halftone dot pattern that gives away many prints as modern reprints

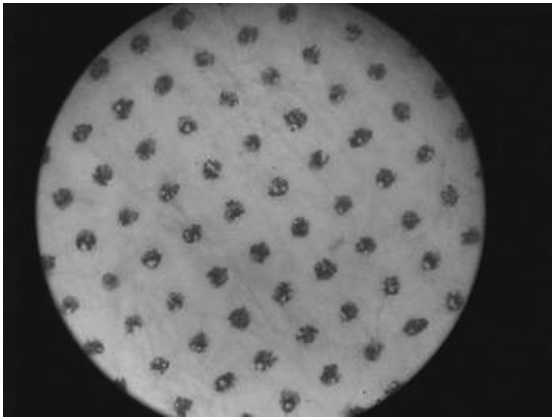
This book has already looked at early halftone 'dot' printing (photoengraving and early 1900s lithography) and what it looks like. Most modern reproductions and counterfeits of antique prints are halftone prints, reproducing the original graphics into a very fine halftone pattern of dots. The modern halftone printing will often have a moire or honey comb pattern. Under strong magnification, the individual dots will often look like little splotches or dots of ink. They won't have the rim or pattern of photoengraving and will be much, much tighter and more even in pattern than early halftone lithography.

Certain antique processes clearly won't have the continuous halftone dot pattern-- etchings, woodcuts and wood engravings, handmade lithography, hand coloring and tinting-- and a modern halftone dot pattern will immediately identify a modern reproduction of one of these. And, as just mentioned, the modern halftone pattern is clearly

different than early halftone photoengraving and lithography.



Modern halftone lithography under the microscope



Modern halftone lithography. A fine pattern of black dots for a back and white image

In some reproductions the entire graphics, including any text and solid border lines, will be translated into the tell tale dot pattern. This is particularly true in cheap home computer reprints and counterfeits. However, with some professionally made reproductions the lettering and border lines will be made solid, while only the central image will be translated into the tell tale dot pattern. So a modern reproduction can have solid graphic areas as in the original, with the halftone process used in parts. Luckily, the border parts usually look clearly different than on the original. There were professionally made reprints of the popular 1909-11 T206 baseball cards, where the text

and borderline are solid as on the original. However, the text is a different font than on the original. Many other things give away the reprints and reprints, including the overall look, paper stock and, of course, the modern halftone dot printing pattern for the central image area

Dating color halftone prints by the primary colors

As time went by and printing modernized, lithography halftone printing came to look more and more like modern halftone printing. While 1905 halftone printing clearly looks old under the microscope, by the 1920s, 30 and 40s it came closer and closer to what the today's printing looks like. The dot patterns became more uniform and fine and the dots themselves were more solid.

Luckily, for color halftone prints-- meaning halftone printing used to reproduce color photos, sketches and painting into true color prints-- the primary printing colors were changed over time. This allows us to determine that a '1930s' or '1940s' color halftone print really is from that period and not modern.

Most of us were taught in school that the primary colors were red, blue and yellow, and, in fact, early half-tone lithographs used these colors, often along with black. Each of the tiny dots of an early half-tone is one of these colors. By overlapping these colors or placing them side-by-side, all colors could be create from pink to purple to green at the naked eye level.

Starting in about the 1950s, the primary printing colors were changed. Red was replaced by magenta (purplish pink) and blue was replaced by cyan (light blue). With rare exceptions, these are the primary colors used today, including with laser printers, photocopiers and inkjet printers.

These color rules apply only to the color half-tone area. The solid borders or below text of a poster or trading card, for examples, do not follow the same rules. They can be printed in any color. Also, monotone images can be any color.

For prints from the 1950s it is hard to predict which primary color will have be found on a particular print. However, with few if any exceptions, the half-tone prints from the 1940s and before will use

red, blue and yellow, while modern reprints and forgeries will use magenta, cyan and yellow.

To figure out which primary colors were used on a print, a microscope is needed. I find that the difference between red and magenta is much more obvious than between blue and cyan. This means that under the microscope I try to isolate a red or magenta dot. It is best to find an area where there isn't dense color. Avoid areas where the dots overlap, as overlapping colors will create different colors. Magenta combined with yellow creates red, so looking in a busy area on a modern print can deceive. In a white area in an image, there will be fewer and isolated ink dots. When a proper dot is isolated, the difference between red and magenta should be obvious. With some prints, the printing is so dense that individual dots cannot be found isolated and this test cannot be made.

Identifying primary colors is advanced stuff and takes practice, but it's a great technique for proving a print is a modern reprint.

In conclusion, if you find that a suspect “1909” half-tone print uses magenta and cyan halftone, this is strong indication that it was printed recently.

The top edge of this 1930s halftone print shows red ink. The red is a key to identifying the print as vintage.

Magenta (dark pinkish) dots on a modern halftone lithograph

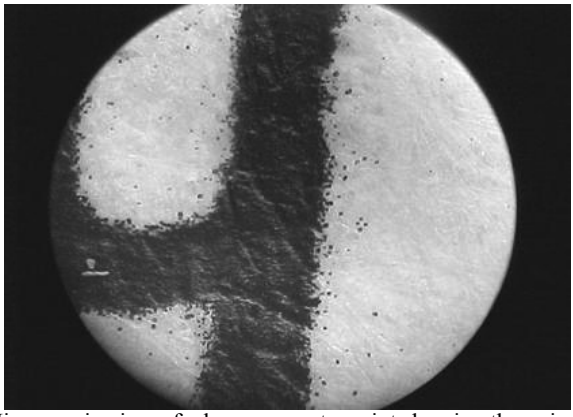
Modern digital prints

Many reproductions and counterfeits are made with computer printers. They will create a halftone dot pattern and use the modern magenta, cyan and yellow colors. Ink jet prints looks very similar to lithographs, with little splotches or dots ink. However, laser prints, photocopies and Xeroxes have a unique look under the microscope.

Laser prints, color photocopy and Xeroxes all use *electrostatic* or *electrographic* printing. Under the microscope, the resulting prints are easily identified. The graphics are made up of many tiny dust-like grains of pigment. Electrostatic printing doesn't use ink, but dry dusty toner. The graphic design is electrostatically charged, attracting the toner to the area where it is fused (heated and melted) into place. However, not all of the grains of pigment make it the intended area, so the print is identified by the many stragglers outside the lines.

Under the microscope it looks like it needs a dusting.

It should go without saying that no 1800s or early 1900s tobacco card, advertising sign, postcard or similar print was made with a laser printer or color photocopier, so the identification of electrostatic print confirms an 'antique' print is a modern reproduction or fake.



Microscopic view of a laser computer print showing the unique 'dusty' ink pattern

Dust pigment under the microscope of a color laser print

(7)
A brief guide to paper

Having a basic knowledge of paper is important. Many fakes and reprints are identified as the paper is too modern or the wrong type for the print to be an original. This chapter is a brief look at some important types of paper throughout history.

While the type and age of the paper can help determine the authenticity of a print, it is not in and of itself proof. Some forgers use old paper. However, many prints are identified as fakes because the paper used is too modern or otherwise inconsistent with the original. Many catalogues raisonne for famous artists (official listings of their prints) list the type(s) of paper used for a print.

* * * *

The following are standard types of paper.

Laid paper: Until the 1750s, all paper was laid paper. It was made on a mesh consisting of strong wires about an inch apart, with finer wires laid close together across them.This gridiron pattern can be seen when the paper is held to the light. Today, some writing paper is still laid, though the pattern being more of a decoration.

A paper print from the 1500s or 1600s has to be on laid paper.

Wove paper: About 1755, wove paper was invented.Wove paper is made on a finely woven mesh, so the paper does not have the rigid lines pattern of laid paper.Laid and wove paper are easily differentiated when held to the light. Most of today's paper, including computer printer and typing paper, is wove.No print from before 1750 could be on wove paper.

Laid paper (left) and its gridion lines next to wove paper (right)

Rag versus wood pulp.In the early history paper was made from rags.Starting about the mid 1800s, rag pulp began to be replaced by wood pulp.Wood became a popular choice due to the scarcity of rags and because wood pulp paper was cheaper to manufacture.The first successfully made American wood pulp paper was manufactured in Buffalo, New York, in 1855. By 1860, a large percentage of the total paper produced in the U.S. was still rag paper. Most of the newspapers printed in the U.S. during the Civil War period survived because they were essentially acid-free 100% rag paper, but the newspapers printed in the late 1880s turn brown because of the high acid content of the wood pulp paper. In 1882, the sulfite wood pulp process, that is still in use today, was developed on a commercial scale and most of the high acid content paper was used thereafter in newspapers, magazines and books.

Counterintuitively, modern paper, especially in books, letters and newspapers, is much more likely to turn brown and brittle than paper from before the American Civil War. For the beginning collector, the paper on an early 1800s print can be surprisingly fresh and white.

Early 1900s newspapers turned brittle and brown

* * * *

Chronology of Paper

The following is a brief chronology of paper history.Paper has been traced to about 105 AD China.It reached Central Asia by 751 and Baghdad by 793, and by the 14th century there were paper mills in several parts of Europe.

105: Paper making invented in China.
400: Invention of true ink in China.
610: Paper making introduced to Japan from China.
770: The earliest instance of text printing upon paper, in China.
868: Earliest printed book, the Diamond Sutra, in China.
900: First use of paper in Egypt.
1228: First use of paper in Germany.
1282: Watermarks first used in Europe.
1319: Earliest use of paper money in Japan.
1450-55 Johan Gutenberg's forty two line Bible produced.
1470: First paper poster, in the form of a bookseller's advertisement.
1521: First use of rice straw in Chinese paper.
1609: First newspaper with regular dates (Germany)
1662: First English newspaper introduced
1869: The first 'Dutch Gilt' papers made in Germany.
1750: Cloth backed papers introduced.Used for maps, charts, etc.
1755: Wove paper introduced
1758: First forgery of bank notes

1824: First machine for pasting sheets of paper together is introduced. Cardboard is first formed.
1830: Sandpaper introduced commercially.
1830s: Coated paper introduced. This paper is usually coated with China clay, which makes it white and smooth, sometimes glossy.It is most often used in art and illustrated books.
1842: Christmas card invented.
1844:First commercial paper boxes made in America.
1854:Paper made from chemical wood pulp patented.
1862:Tracing paper introduced commercially
1871:Roll toilet paper introduced.
1875:First instance in U.S. of paper coated on both sides.
1903: Corrugated cardboard introduced. Replaced many wooden boxes.
1905: Glassine paper introduced
1906: Paper milk-bottles introduced
1909: Kraft paper introduced
1910: Bread and fruit wrapped in printed paper

Corrugated cardboard

glassine paper envelope

* * * *

Some common fine art paper terms

Blind stamp: an embossed sealed used to identify the artist, publisher, printer or collector.

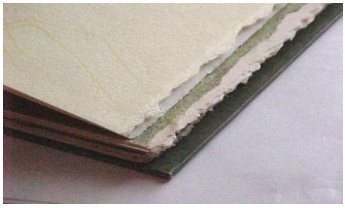
blind stamp

China Paper: a soft paper made in China from bamboo fiber.

Chine appliqué,or chine collé: A chine appliqué is a print in which the image is pressed into a thin sheet of China paper which is backed by a thicker and stronger paper. Some proof prints are chine appliqués.

Cold pressed: A paper with a slight surface texture made by pressing the finished paper between cold cylinders.

Deckle edge: the rough, almost feathery edge on hand made paper.


paper with deckle edges

Drystamp: blindstamp

Embossment:A physically raised or depressed design in the paper.

Enameled paper: any coated paper.

Glassine paper: A super smooth, semi-transparent paper that is

often used to make the envelopes that hold stamps

Hand made Paper: Paper made by hand in individual sheets.

Hot Pressed: A paper surface that is smooth.Made by pressing a finished paper sheet through hot cylinders.

India paper: an extremely thin paper used primarily in long books to reduce the bulk.

Machine Made Paper: Made on a machine called a "Fourdrinier."Produces consistent shape and textured paper.

Marbling: a decorative technique of making patterns on paper

Mouldmade Paper: paper that simulates hand made paper, but is made by a machine.

Parchment: An ancient form of paper made out of animal skin. It is smooth and semi-translucent

Plate Finish: A smooth surface.

Rag Paper: Made from non-wood fibers, including rags, cotton linters, cotton or linen pulp.

Rough: a heavily textured paper surface

Tooth: A slight surface texture.

Vellum: a modern version of parchment, with the same dense, animal skin-like appearance.A slightly rough surface and is semi-translucent.Some drafting paper is called vellum. It is made from animal skin.

Velox: Black and white paper print for proofing or display.

* * * *

Watermarks

For centuries paper manufacturers have often distinguished their product by means of watermarks. A watermark is a design in paper made by creating a variation in the paper thickness during manufacture.The watermark is visible when the paper is held up to a light.Watermarks can sometimes give important information about the age of the paper and the authenticity of the print.

Watermarks are known to have existed in Italy before the end of the 13th century. Two types of watermark have been produced. The more

common type, which produces a translucent design when held up to a light, is produced by a wire design laid over and sewn onto the sheet mold wire (for hand made paper) or attached to the "dandy roll" (for machine-made paper). The rarer "shaded" watermark is produced by a depression in the sheet mold wire, which results in a greater density of fibers--hence, a shaded, or darker, design when held up to a light. Watermarks are often used commercially to identify the manufacturer or the grade of paper. They have also been used to detect and prevent counterfeiting and forgery.

Catalogues raisonne often list watermarks used or otherwise discuss watermarks as it relates to the artists' work.

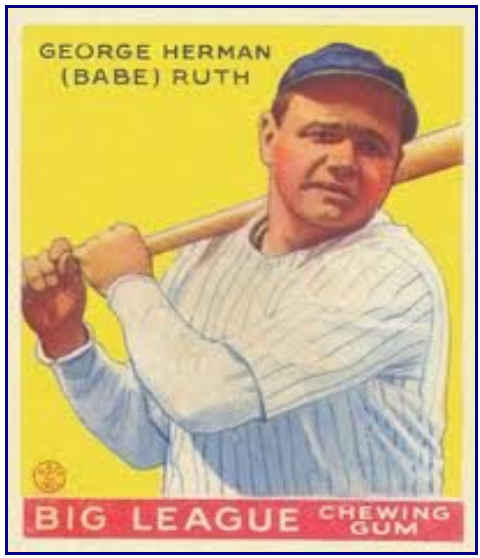
Examples of how watermarks help identify prints:

If a Salvador Dali print has a watermark consisting of the word "ARCHES" with an infinity sign (sideways '8') beneath, the print is a fake. Dali used ARCHES brand paper, but in 1980 ARCHES added the infinity sign to the watermark. 1980 was past Dali's working career and Dali himself stated that he never used the 'infinity' paper. While this watermark is easily identified, some enterprising forgers and dealers, picked the 'infinity' paper where the watermark was near an edge so they could conveniently cut off the infinity.A simple rule of thumb for collectors, is to make sure that you buy a Dali print on Aches paper where the watermark is entirely on the paper and away from an edge.

For John James Audubon's large size "Birds of America" prints, the presence of a "J. Whatman" watermark is strong evidence that the print is original. No known reprints or later restrikes are on paper with that watermark.

Pablo Picasso sometimes used paper with his personal watermark.

(8)
How to Use a Black Light to Identify Reprints and Fakes of Antique Paper Collectibles



Is it an original or Reprint 1933 Goudey Babe Ruth? A black light can tell you.

For collectors of pre-World War II paper memorabilia—whether it's sports cards, photographs, scorecards, postcards, advertising posters or booklets— there is a sophisticated yet inexpensive and easy to use tool for quickly identifying many modern reprints and fakes. This tool is called a longwave ultraviolet light, better known as a black light. While there are many uses for black light in collecting and beyond, this article shows how it can be used to identify modern paper and card stock.

How Black Light Works

A black light allows the collector to see things invisible under normal daylight. Ultraviolet light is outside the human's visible spectrum, meaning it cannot be seen by human eyes. However, in a dark room materials can fluoresce (glow) under black light. Most of us have experienced black lights that make the whites on our shirts or shoes glow brightly. Some materials fluoresce brightly, some not at all and the rest somewhere in between. The fluorescence varies in color. Under ultraviolet light, gemstones and antique glass can fluoresce red, yellow, green, purple, white and orange. The quality of fluorescence happens at the atomic level of the material. With a black light you are doing a scientific test on collectibles.

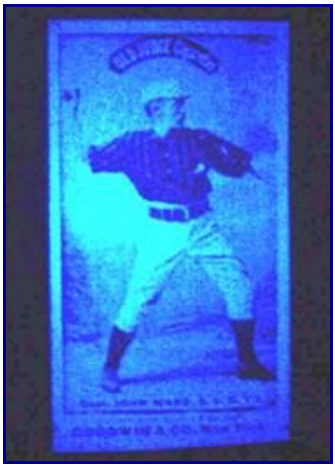
Identification of Modern Papers Using Black Light

A black light is effective in identifying many, though not all, modern paper and cardboard stocks.

Starting in the late 1940s, manufacturers of many products began adding `optical brighteners' and other new chemicals to their products. Optical brighteners are invisible dyes that fluoresce brightly under ultraviolet light. They were used to make products appear brighter in normal daylight, which contains some ultraviolet light. Optical brighteners were added to laundry detergent and clothes to help drown out stains and to give the often advertised `whiter than white whites.' Optical brighteners were added to plastic toys to makes them brighter and more colorful. Paper manufacturers joined the act as well, adding optical brighteners to many, though not all, of their white papers stocks.

A black light can identify many trading cards, posters, photos and other paper items that contain optical brighteners. In a dark room and under black light optical brighteners will usually fluoresce a very bright light blue or bright white. To find out what this looks like shine a recently made white trading card, family snapshot or most types of today's computer paper under a black light.

If paper stock fluoresces very bright as just described, it almost certainly was made after the mid 1940s.



A 1880s tobacco card reprint fluorescing bright light blue under black light

It is important to note that not all modern papers will fluoresce this way as optical brighteners are not added to all modern paper. For example, many modern wire photos have no optical brighteners. This means that if a paper doesn't fluoresce brightly this does not mean it is necessarily old. However, with few exceptions, if a paper object fluoresces very brightly, it could not have been made before World War II.

The beauty of this black light test is you can use it on items where you are not an expert. You may be no expert on 1920s German Expressionist movie posters, World War I postcards or American Revolutionary War era etchings, but you can still identify many modern reprints of those items. In the same way, the black light can also identify modern reproduction of antique cloth items, as the white cloth or stitching sometimes fluoresces very brightly it was made after WWII.

Tips on effective use of black light

A black light must be used in a dark room, the darker the better. Take a minute or three to let your eyes get adjusted to the dark. The paper memorabilia being examined should be on something that does not fluoresce. Something that does not fluoresce will appear black under

black light. If your background fluoresces too brightly, it can be hard to judge the fluorescence of the memorabilia.

It is best for the memorabilia to be removed from any top loader, glass, plastic sleeve or other holder. The holder itself can fluoresce or otherwise mask the memorabilia's fluorescence. Shine the black light on all sides of the memorabilia. Some trading cards and photographs have coatings on one side.

For comparison purposes, you may wish to have a shard of modern computer paper that fluoresces brightly. Between the black table and bright shard, you will have a range on the spectrum for comparison.

The fedora hat's inside tag fluoresces brightly under blacklight, showing that the hat is modern.

Practice using the black light. See what items from all years look like under black light. Feel free to look at magazines, books, typing paper, glass vases, plastic. Some around the house materials that fluoresce brightly include granular laundry detergent, vaseline and some reading glasses.

Purchasing a black light

The collector should purchase a longwave black light, as opposed to a shortwave or 'germicidal' black light. Shortwave is important in a few specialty areas, including identifying stamps and gem stones, but longwave is the safest and all you need for most paper memorabilia. The most common and inexpensive black lights on the market are longwave.

Black lights are widely available and have a wide variety of uses.

They are used by geologists, chemists, detectives, art museums, plumbers and even scorpion hunters (scorpions fluoresce). Black lights are sold by many science, hobby or rock stores. They can be purchased online.

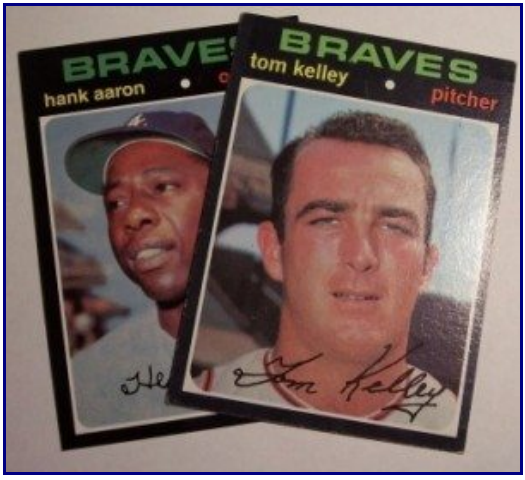
The following are common styles of black lights you'll find. You can pick whichever suits your fancy, as they will all do the job.

Popular style of black light. Portable and runs on batteries.

Pocket sized LED black light flashlight. Fits in the palm of the hand or in your pocket.

(9)
A Standard Technique For Identifying Trading Card Reprints: Direct Comparison

This article was written specifically about trading cards old and new, but can be applied to any mass produced antique collectible print.



1971 Topps: from this picture both cards look good. However, the Aaron is a reprint. In subsequent pictures you will see the cards differ in distinct ways.

A standard and often highly effective way to detect trading card counterfeits and reprints is by directly comparing the card in question with one or more known genuine examples. Granted, it is uncommon for the collector to already own duplicates, especially if it's a 1933 Goudey Babe Ruth or 1965 Topps Joe Namath. However, good judgment is often made when comparing a card to different cards from the same issue. Comparing the Ruth to a bunch of Goudey

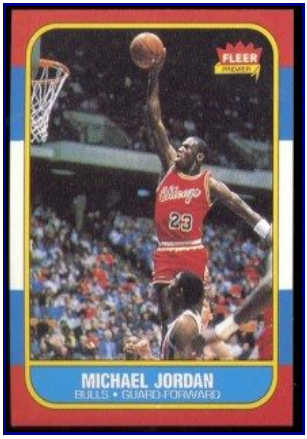
commons and the Namath to a handful of other 1965 Topps.

A T206 Ty Cobb, and even a T206 Honus Wagner, was printed on the same sheet as T206 commons. The printers did not bring out special cardstock and VIP inks for the superstars. When you are studying the qualities of T206 commons, you are also studying the qualities of the T206 Wagner and Ed Plank.

If there are cards insufficient in number or of extra poor quality (caught in the back yard thresher), techniques discussed discussed in the other chapters will be essential.

In nearly all cases, counterfeits and reprints are significantly different than the real card in one and usually more than one way. However, in many cases, even though a difference or two is identified (cardboard a bit thinner and lighter in color), this doesn't answer whether the difference is due to fakery or is a genuine variation.

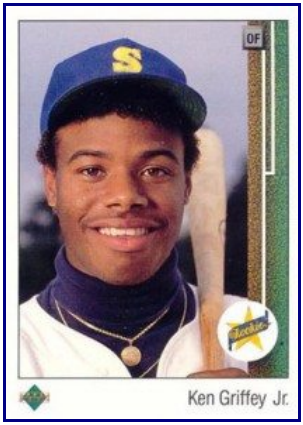
Comparing cards is highly effective in identifying modern counterfeits. If you know how to properly compare cards, you should be able to identify a fake 1986-7 Fleer Michael Jordan and 1979-80 OPC Wayne Gretzky.



Michael Jordan rookie reprint

Before examination, the collector should be aware of variations within an issue. A genuine 1956 Topps baseball card can be found on dark grey or light grey cardboard. While the 1887 Old Judges are usually sepia in color, pink examples can be found. The examiner

must also take into consideration reasonable variations due to aging and wear. A stained card may be darker than others. An extremely worn or trimmed card may be shorter and lighter in weight than others in the issue. A card that has glue on back will allow less light through when put up to the light. The collector will often have to make a judgment call when taking these variations into effect. This is why having experience with a variety of cards is important.



All major rookie cards have been counterfeited

The following is a short list of things to look at. You are welcome to add your own observations to the list.

Obvious Differences: This can include text or copyright date indicating the card is a reprint, major size difference, wrong back. Many of these problems are obvious even in an online scan.

If you are experienced with an issue, perhaps you've collected Goudeys for the last few years, most reprints and counterfeits within that issue will be obvious. They simply will look bad or be printed on a different type of card stock.

Dimensions of face and back: This can do be done through comparison with numerous other cards. Price guides will list the size for standard issues.

Dimensions of printing: This includes size of the image, borders and text. Most counterfeits made by photocopiers will have correct measurements. However, a counterfeit of the 1956 Topps Willie Mays

card had the correct card measurement but the print itself, including the image of Mays, was too large. This created borders around the image that were too thin.

Solid areas: With a magnifier or microscope, compare which areas are solid and which are not. On a genuine T206, the border around the player picture and the player's name and team below is solid. While many reprints will also have these areas solid, many will not.

On the 1971 Topps baseball cards, the faux signatures in the front player picture is solid black. On many reprints the faux signature will be made up of a dot pattern.

Weight: Significant differences in card weight can be important, signifying that a different cardstock was used. Small differences are less significant and could be due to natural variation.

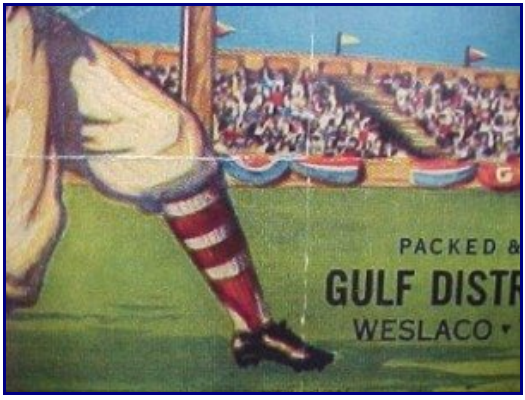
Appearance of card stock and surfaces: This includes color, texture and feel. The correct gloss is hard to duplicate on a reprint, and most reprints will have different gloss than the original. Make sure to check both sides. A T206 and 1951 Bowman, for examples, have different textures front versus back. Make sure to check the thickness, color and appearance of the card's thickness or edge. The edge often shows the cardstock to be different.

The reprint 1971 Hank Aaron has an different gloss (shiny) and coloring than the original card.

Font and size of lettering and border lines: Some reprinters go to

the effort of recreating the lettering and border lines, making them solid like with the originals. In many of these reprints, the font of the lettering is noticeably off. This includes the thinness of the lines, height of the letters, and the distance between lines of lettering. If you are familiar with an issue, the lettering on one of these reprints will be strikingly different at first glace. Similarly, the border lines and designs may be noticeably different. In a few cases, the counterfeiter left out entire words from the text.

Unnatural signs of reproduction: In some cases, thoughtless errors appear on a forgery that has been photocopied or computer scanned. If a piece of lint or dirt was on the photocopier or scanner, it may appear on the reprint. A photocopier forgery of the 1952 Bowman card of Mickey Mantle has a small white mark on his chin that doesn't appear on genuine cards. The genuine card used for reproduction may have a crease or scrape which can literally felt on the genuine card, but is only reproduced on the reprint.



This computer reprint of a 'Safe Hit' food packaging label has a picture-only of the folding creases. If it were real, you would be able to feel the crease lines with your finger and see the bend with your eyes.

Opacity: Opacity is measured by the amount of light that shines through an item, or the 'see through' effect.

Cardstock and ink vary in opacity. Some allow much light through, some allow none, while there rest will fall somewhere in between. Most dark cardboard will let through little if any light. White stocks will usually let through more. While two cardboard samples may look

identical in color, texture and thickness, they may have different opacities. This could be because they were made they were made in different plants, at a different time and/or were made from different substances.

Testing opacity is a good way to compare card stock and ink. The same cards should have the same or similar opacity.

When held to a normal desk lamp, the Aaron lets through much more light than the Tom Kelley.

Opacity tests should be done with more than one card from the issue. Comparisons should take into consideration variations due to age, staining, soiling and other wear, along with known card stock variations in the issue. It must be taken into consideration that normal differences in ink on the card will affect opacity. If one genuine T206 card has a darker picture (a dark uniformed player against dark background), it should let less light through than a genuine T206 card with a lighter picture (a white uniformed player against a light sky).

The opacity test can detect many restored expensive cards. In the past, some genuine but low grade star cards (1933 Goudey Ruth, T206 Cobb, etc) have been restored in part by having the rounded corners rebuilt with paper fibers from other cards and glue. When held to the light, the built up corners are often seen as they let through a different amount of light than the rest of the card.

Black Light Test . Studying the degree and color of fluorescence

under a black light is an unbeatable tool for comparing ink and cardboard. If you spread out in the dark a pile of 1983 Topps baseball cards with the exception that one is a parallel 1983 OPC brand, the OPC will be easy to pick out with black light. The OPC is made out of a different card stock and fluoresces many times brighter than the Topps stock. This is the way it often works for reprints and counterfeits. Reprints and counterfeits were made with different cardstock and often fluoresce differently than the genuine cards. The reprint may fluoresce darker, lighter or with a different color. In some cases, a reprint and an original may fluoresce the same, but in many cases the black light will pick out the reprints with ease.

* * * *

Sometimes, the differences between a questioned card and genuine examples will be significant enough that the collector will be nearly certain it is a fake. If that 1984 Topps Dan Marino rookie has a significantly different gloss, thickness, fluorescence and opacity from genuine commons in the issue, the card is more than probably a reprint.

In other cases, the differences will not be significant enough and further tests will be necessary. If the questioned card has a slightly off color, it will take tests described in other chapters to determine if the color is due to reproduction or a natural variation on a genuine card.

Even if the differences are significant and obvious, further tests are still warranted to provide definitive proof that it is a fake. For example, the proof of fakery would be irrefutable if further tests shown later reveal that the cardstock and printing process dates to years after the original cards were issued.

(10)
Identifying Prints Made From the Same Printing Plates

There is an effective method for identifying prints made from the same printing plates. This test is called the *printing plate signature test*. This is a useful test for all types of prints, from fine art to modern commercial prints.

If it can be determined that the original plates were used to make a print, that is evidence the print being original, or at least a later restrike. Most forgeries and reproductions do not use the original printing plates. This test is most effective when examining a specific print, but trends across a set of prints, such as a set of trading cards, can sometimes be established.

The plate signature test involves finding idiosyncrasies, or signatures, in the print that came from the printing plate. A blatant example of a signature would be if a printer accidentally dropped a metal relief plate on the floor, putting a dent into the upper right corner and all the resulting prints were missing the ink in the exact same pattern as the dent.

The signatures we are looking for aren't so obvious and must be discovered under the microscope. They usually don't exist on a print because someone cracked or dropped a plate, but by the unique way the plate was formed.

If two prints share the same microscopic signatures it is strong evidence they were made from the same plate. Not only would these very small signatures be difficult to reproduce, most counterfeiters won't even know they exist.

Using printing plate signature tests, we look at one printed color at a time. For a monotone print, only on printing plate was used. If a print is in color, several plates were used-- at least one for each color.

Before we proceed, it must be noted that there are limitations to the printing plate signature test. The lack of shared details does not necessary indicate that one print is a fake. As described throughout this chapter, there can be variations between genuine prints.

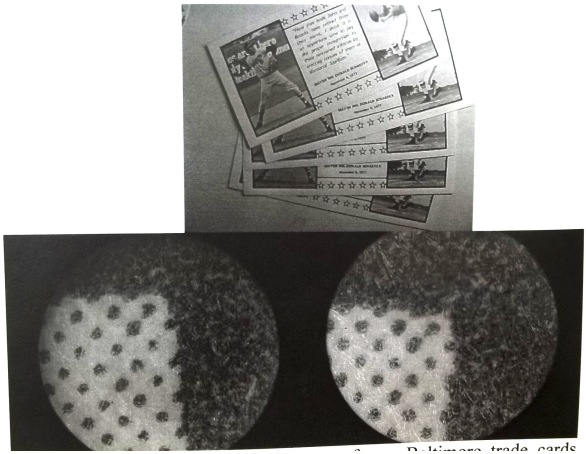
Effective use of the printing plate signature test is dependent on experience gained by examining many prints. The expert examiner will be able to identify what are true signatures from the plate and what are smudges, ink level differences and other common variations.

Monotone prints

Finding plate signatures on a one color print is the easiest, as there are no overlapping colors to complicate things. Look for specific details on the known genuine print. For example, the bottom of the 'f' on a print may have a little indentation from a chink on the printing plate. Or look in a far corner to see how the half-tone dots look at a specific spot. Check areas such as a a corner or edge, where you can find the exact same area on the other print. If you check a half-tone dot in the middle of an image, it may be impossible to find the same spot on the other print.

If a number of the same microscopic idiosyncrasies appear on different prints, it is strong indication the prints were made from the same plate.

It is important to realize that there can be variations between genuine prints. In some cases, thousands or more of the same print were made and variations are bound to exist. Most common are smudges and different levels of link coverage that can make some prints darker (or lighter) or different in tone. With intaglio prints, the plate may wear down over time and the plate may be reworked by the artist. Again, it takes experience examining many prints to know to make good judgments about plate signatures.



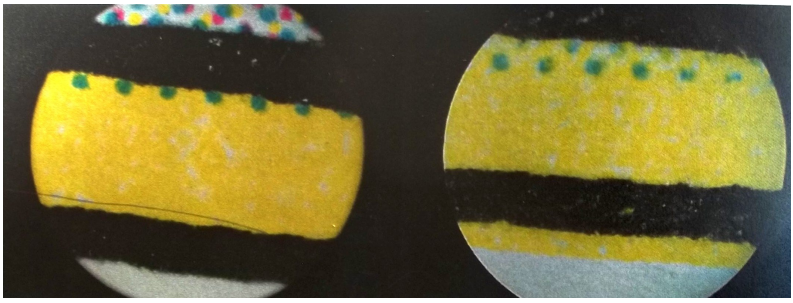
The top picture shows a group of rare Baltimore trade cards featuring local sports heroes Brooks Robinson and Johnny Unitas. It also shows close ups of two of the prints, showing the same corners on the image of the Robinson image. While not exactly the same, the pattern of the half-tone dots near the corner is consistent. Each 45 degree line of half-tone dots closest to the corner has three dots. The second closest 45 degree line has five dots, the third has seven. Even though the dots can vary is size, this pattern and count is the same throughout all the prints . This is a signature of the plate that would difficult to reproduce and likely would differ on a reprint.

Another microscopic plate signature is this little tail on one of the 'Ds' in the text. Ordinarily, this might be dismissed as a possible smudge of ink, except in this case it was present on all the prints.

The above copyright symbol on this mass produced print is smudged. Copyrights on other prints in this issue are not smudged and look much thinner and cleaner. While the general design might be a signature, the smudging is not.

Color prints

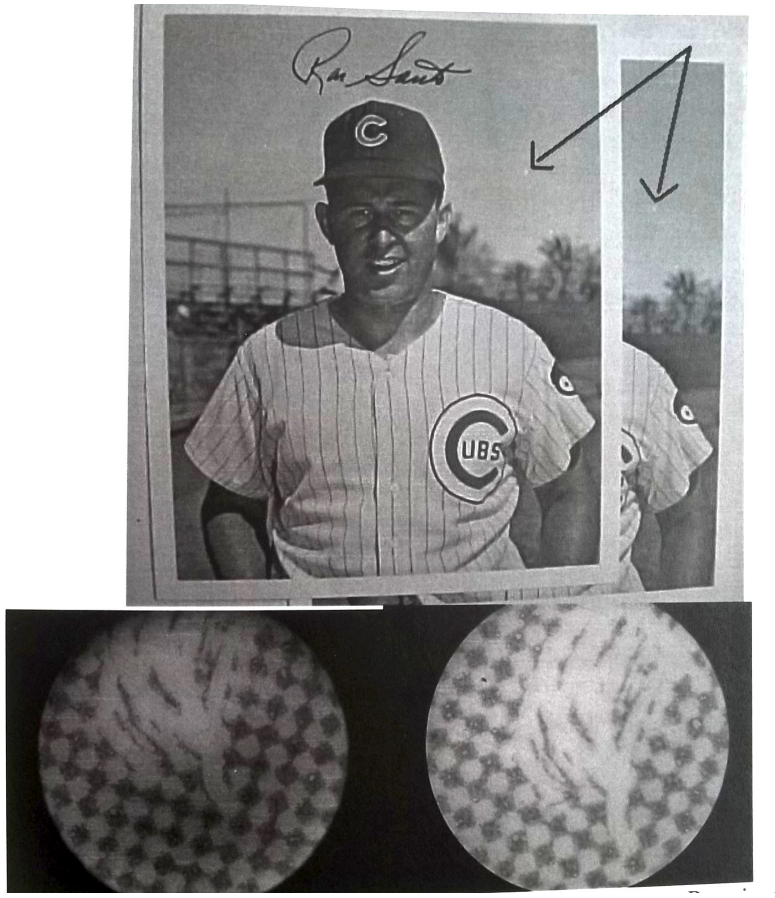
Prints printed with different color plates must still be looked at one color at a time. Each of the colors is printed from a separate printing plate. Along with smudges and different ink levels, common variations within authentic prints are registration differences where the colors were lined up slightly differently.



The above shows microscopic images from two prints from the same 1972 prints issue. Registration differences such as this are not uncommon even with modern prints.

Due to registration differences, the examiner isolates one color at a time and does not compere it with other colors. If he compare colors, he might incorrectly say the above 1972 prints were made from different printing plates. So the examiner might find a convenient

one color area such as a corner of a letter where the single color is isolated. In some cases finding an isolated area is easy, while in other cases it is difficult to impossible.



In the strictly blue background of a 1967 commercial print there is a white spot that most casual observers wouldn't notice Under the microscope it is seen to be from a scrape to the printing plate which mars the half-tone dots. The marks are the same and the dots line up the same. These prints were clearly printed from the same printing plate.

Questions surrounding tint and color variations

With a print of slightly different color tint or tone than normal, the question often is whether this variation is due to reproduction or is it a natural variation of a genuine print. Looking for plate signatures will often answer this. As already noted, within genuine print runs there can be variations in color and tone caused by the amount of ink on the plate, poor registration and, to a lesser extent, smudging. If the print in question has plate signatures identical to a known original print and other aspects of the print are consistent (size, paper stock, etc), minor color or tonal differences can assumed to be natural.

Trends across an issue

With some issues of different prints, such as a particular set of trading cards, trends can be established across all or some of the prints. These trend involves some particular small detail that appears on every print. This could be the print company's insignia in a corner or the copyright mark. It is the examiner's responsibility to determine, when and how a trend exist. This is done by examining many different prints.

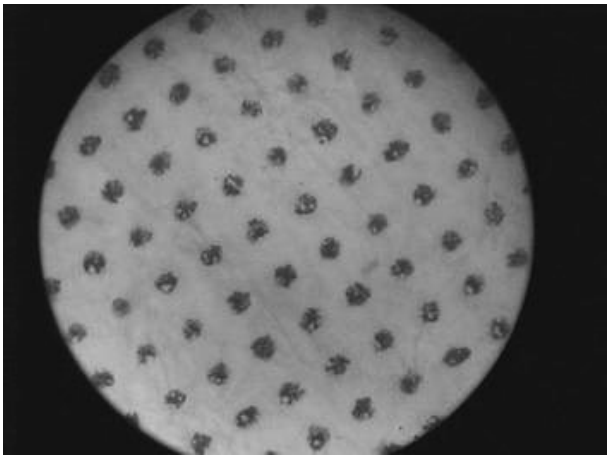
Dots per area

Another trend the examiner should for within half-tone prints is the dots per area used. On a print there is a specific number of dots per area (per inch, per centimeter or however you wish to measure) that is almost always consistent across the print run. The dots per inch can vary between colors. For example, the number of blue dots per inch on a particular print may not be the same as the black dots per inch. So when looking at two prints the number should be compared with the same color in the other print.

In order to compare the dots per area, one must examine the print under the microscope and in an area where the dots can be counted. So long as the magnification of the microscope is the same when looking at each print, a good comparison can be made.

Many different prints can have the same number of dots per inch, so the fact that the count is the same doesn't prove the prints are the both

from the same printing plates. However, two of the same original prints should have the same dots per inch.



The longest line either direction in this magnification has ten dots

* * * *

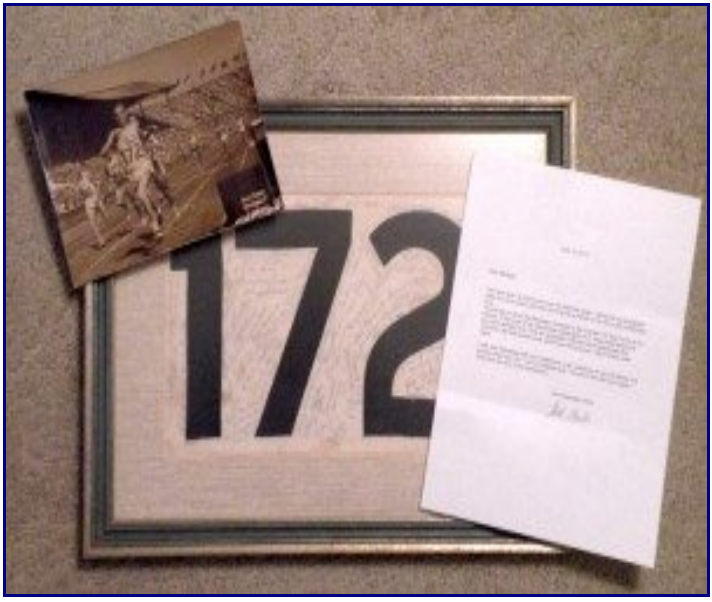
As noted, there sometimes were later restrikes made from the original plates. Salvador Dali made official, and sometimes signed and limited edition numbered, restrikes in later years. Some Rembrandts were restrikes made by his students after his death. William Hogarth restrikes were made many, many years after his death.

In the case of Dali, his restrikes are well documented in his catalogue raisonne and easily identifiable, and many years later Hogarth restrikes are in different designs, states and on modern wove instead of the original laid paper. Many of these restrikes have value, though much less than the originals.

This shows that, while printing plate signatures are evidence of originality, they are not always proof. One should always look at all qualities and parts, including the paper, when assessing age and originality. One should also be knowledgeable about the history of the artist and prints. For collectors of Hogarth, for example, the presence of years later restrikes on the maket is common knowledge.

(11)
The Importance of Provenance in Collecting

One often hears the word provenance in context of the the fine art world, such as with the sale of a Rembrandt or Renoir painting, while the topic is often idly dismissed or ignored by collectibles and memorabilia collectors. However, provenance should also be an important consideration for collectors of collectables, memorabilia and even trading cards. This article is a look at the significance and various aspects of provenance, and why you should keep it mind as you collect most anything, prints or other.



1948 London Olympics middle distance runner Herbert Barten race worn number autographed by 45 Olympic team members, with Barten signed LOA and original photo of him wearing the number. (Courtesy of Michael Bowlby)

What is provenance?

Provenance most often refers to the history of ownership of an item, and is documented by receipts, letters from owners and similar records. In the case of some famous paintings, the ownership can be traced back for centuries to the original owner. In a broader sense, provenance includes other documentation of an item's history.

If a piece of memorabilia appears in an old auction catalog, is pictured in a magazine article or was shown in a public exhibit, that's documentation of its history. If you find a photo showing football player wearing the exact same jersey you bought at auction, that's a document of its history. If you buy a game used baseball bat from a Major League Baseball online auction and keep the receipt or print out the online sales description page, that's provenance documentation.

First woman to swim the English Channel Gertrude Ederle signed Christmas card with the original mailing envelope with her return address and foreword address to famous autograph collector Roy Pitts. Not only does the envelope help authenticate the card, but it displays well.

Provenance can help establish identity and support authenticity

While provenance does not in and of itself prove authenticity, it can

be useful evidence towards identifying and authenticating an item. Clearly, a letter of provenance from a athlete's estate or team helps establish the authenticity of a game used piece of sports equipment or univorm. A MLB.com (Major League Baseball) 'signed in person' hologram on a signed baseball is strong evidence the signature is genuine. The baseball league has has employees witness all autograph sessions. The auction catalog or sales receipt from a sale by a reputable auction house both establishes the sales history and documents that a reputable source thought it authentic. Even simple documentation showing that an item has been around for decades, such as an old newspaper clipping, rules it out as a recently made fake.

Provenance can help identify important facts. If research shows a photograph came from the Babe Ruth's estate, this will help identify the photo as belonging to Ruth. The Ruth ownership is part of the photo's identity and value. Heck, a toothpick documented as having belonged to Ruth will sell for a few bucks on eBay.

Provenance isn't infallible, is limited in what it says, and authentication requires looking at both the item itself and the provenance, not *just* the provenance. That a baseball bat came from Lou Gehrig's estate doesn't itself prove that it was was used by him in a game. That a Sandy Koufax baseball card belonged to former star pitcher Sandy Koufax doesn't prove that the card is original. Koufax can own reprints just as anyone can. Sometimes a player's letter of authenticity for a personal item gets details wrong. Players' memories can be fuzzy and they can misidentify items, forget dates and places.

Provenance can be forged and that is often revealed when examining the item. For every forged George Washington or Elvis Presley autograph on eBay there is a made up story of how it was originally obtained. It is a running joke amongst vintage baseball card collectors how many modern computer counterfeits on eBay are advertised as “discovered in my grandmother's cabinet” Again, authentication involves looking at all aspects of the item, not just a LOA or the seller's interesting story.

Good provenance can enhance value

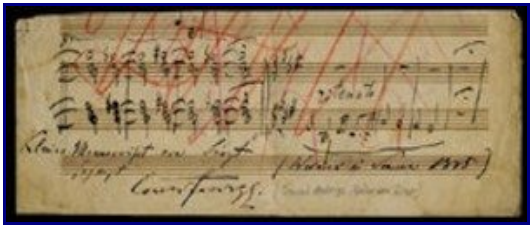
Solid documentation of history, a letter of authenticity from a team or estate, a sales receipt from a well known gallery, dealer or auction

house will make future buyers more confident in the item and willing to spend more. Even when authenticity is not the issue, documentation proving ownership by someone famous or otherwise noted, having been exhibited at a gallery or museum, or having appeared in a magazine or newspaper article will also add to the desirability. Buyers like that stuff.

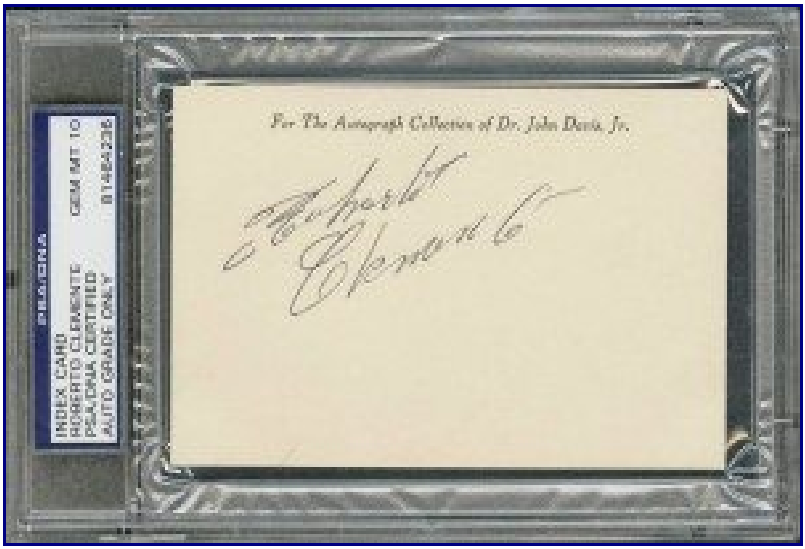
Collectors will pay more for a 1985 New York Yankees team photo that hung at Yankee Stadium, as opposed to one that belonged to Joe Schmoe. Some collectors find the history of an item interesting in and of itself and will pay more where more details are known. Beyond helping authenticate a sports jersey, a photo showing a player wearing it during game action is great for display.

A collector can create his own good provenance by buying from reputable sellers. If you purchase an autograph or rare piece of memorabilia from a well known and respected seller, when you turn to it sell you can show it was purchased from a well known and respected seller. Many game used sports equipment collectors go through old photos and film, trying to find photo matches of their equipment. Many collectors and dealers say a photo match is more valuable than a letter of authenticity.

Prominent autograph expert Jim Stinson says, “Always keep the bill of sale. As a long time buyer of vintage autographs I never ask to see a 'letter of opinion.' But I will often ask to see a bill of sale. Not to see what the item sold for but to track provenance. Even in cases where the seller is long ago deceased. A bill of sale from a reputable dealer is a solid resource.”



Franz Liszt handwritten musical notes with identifying note at bottom from Conrad Ansorge. Ansorge was Liszt's former piano student in the 1800s and went on to be become a noted composer and music professor in his own right.



Roberto Clemente autographed index card with the stamp of famed old time autograph collector Dr. John Davis Jr. Davis got his personalized index cards signed in person or through the mail (Courtesy Goldin Auctions).

Provenance can identify fakes, forgeries and alterations

In instances, the documented past of an item has shown that items in auction are fake or altered. The following are just a few examples:

A major auction house auctioned a 'genuine 1920s Cleveland Indians Pro Model hat.' Looking at the auction catalog a collector recognized the hat, because he had once owned it. He had bought it as part of a complete uniform, glove and bat from the estate of a small town player who's baseball team wore caps identical in style to the Indians. This provenance showed that the auction description was false. It was a nice vintage cap, just not a Cleveland Indians cap.

An auction house auctioned a rare and valuable 1800s century cabinet card photograph. A collector recognized the cabinet card from a previous sale, and the previous sale's photos showed that, since that sale, the cabinet card had been extensively restored. The problem was the auction house made no mention of the restoration.

An online dealer auctioned several rare early 1900s lithographs. An earlier auction catalog showed that they had recently been cut from a

large uncut sheet. The dealer made no mention of the recent alterations.

When someone is offering a Gem Mint antique baseball card with perfect razor sharp edges, have you ever considered asking where it was acquired? If the seller himself trimmed the card, he won't be able to provide documentation that it existed in that condition before he owned it. Clearly, there won't be solid documentation for many cards-- cards are discovered in books, bought as part of group lots, a sales receipt may make no mention of grade--but provenance of high grade cards should be something to keep in the back of your mind.

“Authentic autographs have a history or source … forgeries do not," Stinson states. "They just 'appear'.”

Researching the history can find good news. A collector bought a bronze medal that was advertised as having been owned by baseball great Jackie Robinson. The embossed text on the medal showed it came from an obscure small town Wisconsin medical organization, and the diligent collector wrote to the them. After checking their files, the organization wrote back that not only did they have record that the medal was given to Robinson after he gave a speech to the group, but their letter included a photo showing Robinson receiving that very medal. This provenance documentation not only proved the medal authentic but probably doubled the value.

Stolen items

In the high end art world, a legitimate concern is the sale of stolen art. This is a worry because there is much Nazi looted art around and because valuable art has been stolen for museums, galleries and homes. Some European countries require provenance documentation before a high end artwork can even be sold, and many buyers want ownership history to establish that an item isn't stolen.

Stolen items aren't only part of the European art world. Important antque baseballs, autographs and photographs sold by major auction houses have turned out later been stolen from the Hall of Fame and New York Public Library.

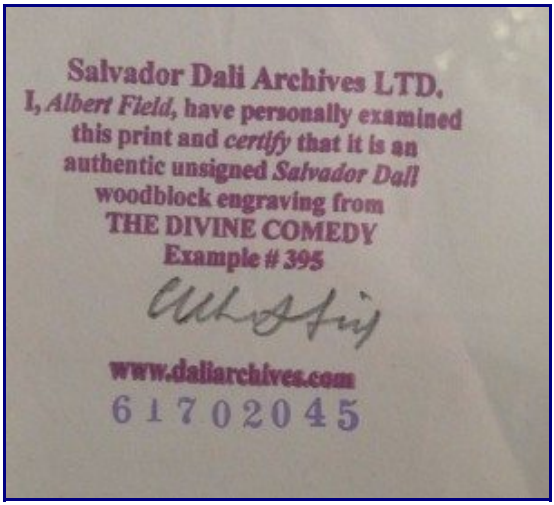
A 1958 plaque given to baseball's Northern League President Herman White with newspaper clipping showing him holding the award. Obtained from his grandson. (Image: Courtesy of Jason Christopherson)

Realize that if you buy a stolen item, you don't own it. The sale wasn't legal and you may have to return it. The very least you want to do is to get a sales receipt at purchase so you can get your money back from that seller. The receipt is for your protection, and if you lose it or never got one you may be out of luck if the item turns out to be stolen.

To protect their history, some countries have passed laws to prevent the export of certain artifacts, usually antiquities. Egypt passed a law in 1983 and China passed a similar law in 2009. Certain classes of items exported past the respective country's date are considered stolen and the seller could get into legal trouble. However, if the artifact owner has documentation showing the item was obtained before the date, it is legal to own and sell. China also places red stickers on old items that are legal for export. The sticker doesn't authenticate the item, but demonstrates that the item is legal to own and resell.

On PBS's Antiques Roadshow, someone brought in a valuable ancient Egyptian figure. A sticker on the bottom showed that not only had it once been purchased from a well known and respected old time dealer of Egyptian antiquities, but that it was purchased before 1983 and was legal to own and resell. Good news for the guy who brought it to the show.

There will someday be a situation where a potential buyer wants proof that you own an item, or even accuses you of selling stolen items. You'll be glad if you kept your receipt.



Stamp and signature on the back of a Salvador Dali print from his official archivist and internationally known Dali expert, Albert Field.

Collectibles as historical artifacts

Vintage memorabilia and collectibles are historical artifacts and collectors, in their way, are historians. Keeping records about an item is a good idea, if not for you, for posterity. The names and places for countless antique photos in online auctions and sales have been lost in time. Identities and sales histories may not enhance the financial value, but many collectors would like to know who are these people in the photos, or at least which state the photo was taken. A future book writer or historian may use that information.

* * * *

This article doesn't offer a set of cookie cutter rules about provenance, and doesn't say how much this or that letter will increase value. However, this column demonstrates that provenance and its significance should be something you keep in mind as you collect, whether it relates to identification, stolen items or history.

(12)
Assorted Final Notes

If you can identify printing processes as described in this book and are able to identify paper and use a black light, you will know more than most collectors, dealers and forgers. You should have a good handle on judging the authenticity of prints.

* * * *

There is no replacement for personal experience and education. Follow the area where you collect, talk to fellow collectors and dealers, know what has been reprinted and faked.

Know the limits of your knowledge. An expert in early baseball cards may be out of his league in movie posters, while a museum Rembrandt curator may know little about the value and rarity of baseball cards.

* * * *

If you are a beginning collector, it is best to start by purchasing inexpensive items. Leave the thousand dollars purchases for a later day. All beginners make mistakes, whether it's overvaluing something or accidentally purchasing a reprint or altered print. Accidentally purchasing a reprint for $5 is is a good learning experience. Accidentally purchasing a fake for $5,000 can be a disaster.

* * * *

Antique prints will be usually be dried out and often brittle. The same with photos. Dried out and brittle is a good sign of old age.

* * * *

Foxing, or brownish age spots, is a good sign of old age.

* * * *

Many collectors and dealers do the 'smell test.' Many old items smell old and musty. Not definitive evidence but a good sign.

* * * *

Alterations

Some otherwise genuine antique prints are altered. This is usually to restore the condition, such as mending rips or creases, bleaching out stains, removing residue and cutting straight worn edges. Alterations are legal so long as as the alterations are disclosed at sale. It is illegal not to disclose.

Most alterations are identifiable. Bleach can be smelled, mended tears are often viewable under close inspection and even from across the room. Viewing the print surface at a sharp angle to a light can show the different gloss and texture of added ink, paper or paint. Holding the print up to light (opacity or 'see through effect') can show alterations and added material.

Added paper, paint and glue is often revealed under black light, as the foreign material fluoresces a different color and/or brightness. A print that measures shorter than documented size for the print will reveal it to be trimmed.

* * * *

Altered counterfeits

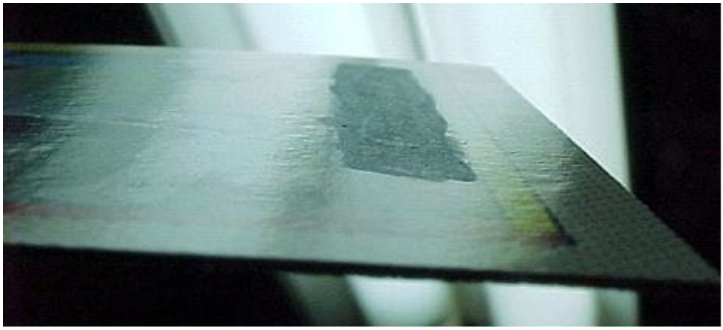
Some trading card counterfeits are otherwise genuine cards that have been altered. This usually involves making a slight alteration in order to transform a common card into a rare and expensive variation. Famous expensive variations of baseball card include the 1909-11 T206 Magie error (misspells the last name of Sherry Magee), T206 Doyle variation (missing text) and the 1990 Topps NNOF (No Name on Front) Frank Thomas.

The collector should take extra care when purchasing expensive variations. This can include getting second opinions, whether from a fellow collector or trusted expert, and purchasing from a good seller.

Altered counterfeits is an area where you can get a worthwhile opinion from a non collector. While you may be the resident baseball card guru in your neighborhood, your spouse or daughter may turn

out to have a keener eye for seeing alterations.

These alterations are identified in the same methods described earlier: surface texture/gloss, opacity, black light, smell.



The added paint on this altered trading card is obvious when viewed at a sharp angle to the desk lamp.

* * * *

Beware of 'varnished' counterfeits

To try and cover-up their handiwork, some fakers will coat the print in a clear substance. This often makes the touchups harder to see with the naked eye. However, the varnish will usually give a trading card or postcard an abnormal gloss and black light florescence. Comparison with genuine examples in the same issue will reveal the difference.

A collector once bought a rare variation baseball card. The card looked okay to him, except the front was much glossier than his other cards in the same issue. The card turned out to be an altered genuine card that had been varnished.

* * * *

Many modern reproductions and fakes are artificially aged via staining (soaking a print in tea or whatever to make it looked toned), rounding corners, roughing up the edges. For seasoned collectors and dealers, the artificial wear is often obvious. Uneven tea and coffee stains won't resemble genuine wear, corners will be obviously artificially worn and even scissors cut, etc.

* * * *

A question you may have is if a forger can use the old techniques to make fakes. The answer is it can be done and artists use old handmade techniques in their original art. However, it would take much time and skill, involve skills and equipment few have, and would only work on brand new creations.

With existing designs-- well known and documented antique trading cards, movie posters, etc that are pictured online-- only modern printing techniques (almost always modern halftone printing) will work to reproduce the designs so they look good at the normal eye level. If you try and reproduce a known design using antique handmade processes, it will simply look bad at the normal, naked eye level.

The antique processes will only be useful when designing a brand new fake, a fake where the design is totally made up and never before existed. Some call these 'fantasy' items.

* * * *

Keep in mind that rubber stamps, while easily identifiable due to the relief printing rim around the edges, aren't hard to make. A faked famous photographer's stamp on the back of a photo or important provenance stamp ('Metro-Golden-Mayer Studios Archives') on a poster wouldn't be the hardest thing to do.

However, the printing plate signature test can identify rubber stamps printed from the original stamp.

* * * *

Forensic ink and chemistry experts can date the relative age of printing by determining how dried out is the ink. Pen and ink on paper slowly dries out over time. By determining the dryness of the ink, the expert can tell you if the ink was applied recently or long ago. It requires that a small sample be removed from the print, expert laboratory testing, and there will be a cost, but this test will give evidence as to whether the printing on a questioned print was done long ago or recently. This test has often been used to identify recent forgeries in court, especially of handwritten letters and documents.

There are other forensic tests used to date ink and paper and that have been used to identify later made forgeries. Forensic chemists can

judge the relative age of paper and ink by identifying the chemicals and other substances in them and knowing when they were used. However, this subject is getting too advanced for this beginner's guide and you would have to hire an well trained expert to perform them. This small blurb is just to show you that there are other tests out there if push comes to shove. You'd likely only need to hire a forensic expert in exceptional and rare circumstances, such as for court dispute over a very expensive and rare questioned print. Most collectors will never need the services, in particular if they are prudent about their purchases.

* * * *

Many little details help indicate an item is genuine. Forgers will rarely go as far as to use old fashioned gilding or embossing on a counterfeit. It is simply easier for them to counterfeit a flat unembellished print. These details support, if not prove in and of themselves, the item is genuine.

* * * *

Scraps versus proofs

Proofs, or pre-final test prints, are valued as production artifacts. They were used by the printers to see how the prints looked-- check colors and overall look, see how the text lined up, etc--, before running off the final print run of 10.000. As test prints, they often have different or missing colors or text, blank backs and can be on different than final stock.

There are also 'scraps' and printing press errors that are mistaken for proofs. These errors often have missing colors or printing errors like proofs, but were simply bloopers that were tossed away by the printers. They also often have handcut edges that many proofs have.

The rule of thumb is that, when in doubt, assume an odd handcut print or trading card is probably a scrap and not a proof. Most of these types of prints are scraps and, without evidence to show otherwise, it likely is not a proof.

Interestingly enough, many scraps are also collected, in particular when the printing errors are particularly unusual and striking. Some errors in color alignment are psychedelic.

* * * *

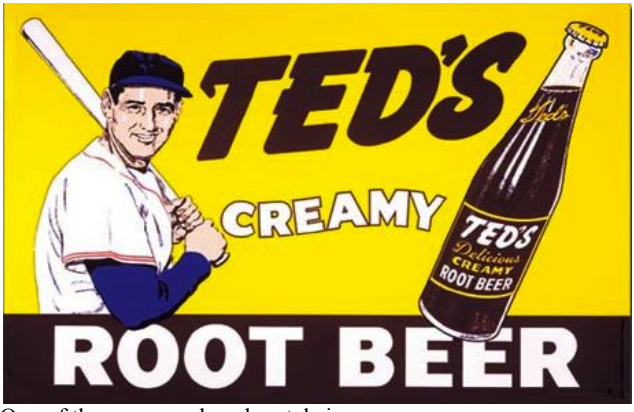
One giveaway of some modern fantasy pieces is the modern text font. The font used is modern and didn't exist in the antique period. When authenticating a valuable and unique 1915 premium, one thing I did was to verify that the text font had been been used in the circa 1915 period by looking online at other prints from the period.

* * * *

For stapled items, such as booklets, calendars or magazines, antique staples are well rusted and dark, with the rust often having bled, if slightly, onto the paper. Bright shiny silvery staples are usually a giveaway the item is a modern reprint or at least recently stapled.

* * * *

In the 1980s and 90s there were a plethora of old fashioned-style metal signs fantasy items and reproductions, including of sports themes-- baseball star Joe Jackson equipment, Ted Williams Root Beer, etc. They were sold as reproductions not originals, though identity and age is often lost in the over the years shuffle.



One of the mass produced metal signs

These reproductions were lithographs produced in large numbers. There is a large upfront cost to making lithographs-- making the designs, original art, setting up printing press, etc.-- and a large print run is required to lower the cost per sign. These reproductions were made before digital technology made things easier to design and inexpensive to print in small runs.

The key is these reproductions are all over the place, found for sale and auction regularly online and at antique stores, and the potential buyer who looks or asks around would know this.

Original antique signs are very limited in number, often with only a handful or fewer of a particular example known to exist and it will be easy to identify if they have been mass reproduced.

It is also important to note that the reproductions are often of a standard modern size, and the originals are often in a different size. If yours is of different size than the plentiful reprints, that is a sign yours might be original, or at least isn't one of those mass reprints.

A last note note on poster and sign reproductions is that many repros today are digital, many made on home computer printers. As these are often made from images taken from the internet and blown up into large size, the images are often of noticeably lesser quality, even when viewing an online auction on your computer at home. An original chomolithograph advertising poster or sign usually had highest quality graphics, with bright colors and exquisite detail. A cheap reproduction will often have washed out colors and muted details.

Original color lithography retained its bright colors and detail if stored well, and many are surprised at how bright the colors are on an antique original. In fact, some new collectors can be worried they own a reprint because the graphics look so bright and new.

(13)
Chapters on Fine Art Prints by Famous Artists: Introduction

original linoleum cut advertising poster by Pablo Picasso

There is a fine line and overlapping between antique prints and original prints by famous artists. For examples, Rembrandt, Picasso and Salvador Dali made their original prints using many of the same handmade printing techniques use to make antique commercial prints, many 1800s Harper's Weekly wood-engravings were based on sketches by the famous American painter Winslow Homer (he was employed as a sketch artist for the magazine) and many famous artists made original prints for commercial purposes. Picasso and Chagall made advertising posters, artists such as Albrecht Durer and Salvador Dali sold prints commercially and Andy Warhol thematically used commercialism and advertising in his art. And many collectors would argue that some antique movie and advertising poster, and even trading cards and postcards, qualify as art. I consider several of the 1909-11 T206 baseball cards to be little works of art.

Way back when you could buy an Albrecht Durer at a local fair from Durer himself.

Some advertising artists, such as James Montgomery Flag, became famous as artists.

Considering this overlap, I've added a couple of extra chapters related to original prints by famous artists.

Needless to say, when considering purchasing an original Rembrandt, Warhol or Salvador Dali, you should take due care with research, provenance, reputation of the seller and authenticity/return guarantee.

Famous artists have often been forged and reproduced and there are less than honest and knowledgeable sellers. However, if you have read the preceding chapters and are able to identify handmade lithography, etching and other processes and can judge paper, you have a tremendous start as a fine arts collector. If you can identify halftone dots and know how to use a black light, you can identify many dime a dozen reprints of Dali and Rembrandt prints.

Detail of an original handmade lithograph by Marc Chagall. As you already know, the average cheap reprint would be easily identified by a fine multi color dot pattern.

(14)
Fine Art Prints: Researching a Famous Artist's Work

For beginner collectors concerned with authenticity, the fine arts of famous artists such as Rembrandt and Picasso can be intimidating and overwhelming. As in all areas of collecting, there are fakes, forgeries and reprints. As one collector said to me when inquiring about a Salvador Dali print he had purchased years earlier, “Not only do I have no idea if this is authentic, I have no idea how to find out if it’s authentic.”

You will be happy to know that there are reference books and websites that the collector can use to help judge the authenticity of a print for sale and learn the specifics about the work.

Catalogues Raisonne

For sellers and buyers of prints by a famous artist, a catalogue raisonne (plural: catalogues raisonne) is an essential information resource. Catalogues raisonne are large illustrated books used by Sotheby's, Christies, museums and advanced collectors to help identify and authenticate prints. They are also a great starting point for the beginning collector, offering an illustrated survey and description of the artist's work.

A catalogue raisonne is a book or series of books covering a specific area of an artist's work (paintings, sculpture, prints, other). They are researched and produced by the top experts in the field, including professors, museums curators and gallery owners. They are often assisted or otherwise approved by the artist or artist's estate.

While catalogues raisonne vary in quality, a good one will be extensively illustrated and give most of the essentials of the artist's original prints. These essentials can include dimensions of a print, type of printing used (etching, engraving, other), number of prints,

editions, how a print is signed and numbered, watermarks, the type of paper used, and so on. A catalogue often includes helpful biographical and artistic information, such as describing the printing techniques and styles, and details known fakes and unauthorized reprints. Some catalogues are so lavishly and colorfully illustrated, they are worth the price simply as picture books for the coffee table.

The essential nature of a catalogue raisonne is that it lists what prints are recognized as genuine works by the artist. While there will be some legitimate uncatalogued prints, most collectors should stick to what are catalogued. If a print for sale is not listed and detailed in the catalogue raisonne or called genuine by other substantive source (expert opinion, authoritative article), the average collector should not buy.

If the least that collectors of the world did was to determine if a print is listed as authentic in the catalogue raisonne and that the bare basics (size, signature, numbering, etc) matches the catalogue listing, the sale of forgeries and fakes would be reduced by over 90 percent.

Obtaining a particular artist's catalogue can be difficult. While catalogues by some artist's can be bought on eBay and popular bookstores such as amazon.com and Barnes and Noble, they are often expensive. Some are extremely difficult to find and a few may not be in English! I own a Picasso catalogue raisonne written in French with German translation and I know neither language.

For the hard-to-find catalogues raisonne, the collector should look high and low. This includes looking at used bookstores, libraries and asking around. Some galleries or dealers have libraries and will let collectors reference them.

With reputable auctioneers and dealers who specialize in expensive fine art, the auction description will typically detail that a print is officially "listed" as genuine by listing the catalogue's title, author and the catalogue number and/or page number for the print. Even if the collector does not have access to the particular catalogue, he will at least know that the print is listed in a catalogue raisonne.

The following are free online catalogues raisonne and related websites for famous artists:

Leroy Neiman: leroyneiman.com
This is Neiman's official site, maintained by his publisher, and contains the complete illustrated catalogue raisonne. It includes commentary for collectors written by the artist.

Andy Warhol: warholprints.com
This website is maintained by a prominent art gallery that worked directly with Warhol and was the original distributer for some of his prints. The information was officially approved as accurate by Warhol's estate.

Salvador Dali: daliarchives.com
Dali is one of the most forged of all artists, and the collector of his work has to be particularly careful. This is the website of the Salvador Dali Archives in New York City, the organization formed with Dali's approval and originally run the world's leading Dali expert, Albert Field. It is the publisher of the official Dali catalogue raisonne (not online). The collector can pay for their opinion on a Dali artwork.

Titles Search:
The Print Council Index to Oeuvre-Catalogues of Prints by European and American Artists. This lists about all of the catalogues raisonne ever published: printcouncil.org/search.html

Online Booksellers:
Barnes and Noble bn.com
Amazon amazon.com
Alibris alibris.com (Specializes in rare books, so offers a larger selection)
eBay ebay.com (Check regularly, and you will often see rare catalogues for auction.)

Other information sources:
askart.com
artnet.com
artdealers.org

(15)
Fine Art Prints: Editions, States, Proofs, Signatures, etc

This article looks at several parts of fine art prints, including things you've likely heard of before but maybe have never known what they exactly meant: press proofs, artists proofs, states, limited editions, etc.

Editions
Fine art prints are often printed in editions. An edition will contain a finite and often known number of prints. There is the normal print run, then there are often additional editions, such as an artist's proof edition or printer's proof edition. The total print run is the sum of all of the editions.

70 regular prints + 20 Artist's Proofs + 14 Printer's Proofs + 10 other prints = 114 total prints.

Many collectors get a mistaken impression of rarity. They may see a print numbered out of 100 and not realize that additional and even larger editions of the print may exist. A rule of thumb is that prints in the regular edition usually far outnumber each of the other editions.

Artist's proofs and printer's proofs are not to be confused with proofs. Proofs are test prints made before the final print run. For example, the printer or artist may make a proof of a print to see how the design is coming along. Looking at the proof she may decide the print needs more red in the face, or more shading to a tree in the background. Proofs will often differ, if only slightly, from the final product and are often on different stock.

Other than perhaps being printed on different paper or having minor printing differences, artist's proofs and printer's proofs are usually identical to the regular prints. Artist's proofs are an additional edition meant for artist's personal use, whether to keep, sell on the open

market or give away to friends and acquaintances. Printer's proofs are just like artist's proofs, except they are made for the printer.

Other common editions include the following:

Hors D' Commerce. Traditionally, these were prints made before the official print run used as a guide for the printer. In modern times, this term is often simply used as a name for an extra edition. In this modern sense, they are essentially the same as artist's proofs and printer's proofs.

Trial Proof. Traditionally a trial proof was used, in similar fashion as the Hors Commerce, as a guide for the printer. In modern times, they are often a name for an extra edition.

Numbers, letters and signatures
Current fine art print editions are often, though not always, hand numbered and/or signed by the artist, usually in pencil or crayon. Pen ink can be detrimental to a print, as it can bleed. This writing is often on the lower white border area. Often times, the numbering indicates the number of prints in the edition. For example, an edition may be numbered 1/100, 2/100...., indicating that there are one hundred prints in the edition. Numbering can be found in Arabic (1, 2, 3) and Roman (I, II, III).

Unless someone in the know says so, it should not be assumed that the prints are numbered in order of printing (#1/100 is printed first, 3/100 is printed third), because they often aren't. If one edition is numbered and another is not, it is reasonable to assume that the unnumbered had a larger print run.

An ‘unlimited edition’ means there was no specified limit to how many prints there could be, and often means many prints were made.

In addition to possible numbering, prints often have handwritten or printed letters that identify the edition. The regular edition will ordinarily have no extra lettering. Common lettering for other editions are shown below. Most often the letters are next to the numbers, such as 'AP 5/100'

Artist Proofs: AP or EA

Printer's Proof: PP
Hors D' Commerce: HC or HDC
Trial Proof: TP

Some editions are hand signed by the artist and some or not. The catalogue raisonne, the official listing of an artists artworks, will detail how an edition is signed, numbered and labeled

Some prints are **plate signed**. This means that the artist's signature was made into the printing plate and printed with the rest of the printed design. In other words a 'plate signed Salvador Dali engraving' means it is not autographed/hand signed by Dali. The signature is a faux signature or pre-printed part of the graphics. If Sotheby's or some respected dealer says a print is 'hand signed,' then it's autographed by hand.

'Plate signed': This Salvador etching is plate signed in the upper left, meaning the 'Dali' is part of of the print and not hand signed or autographed

Some editions are made a long period, sometimes even decades, after the original printing. Catalogues raisonne will usually list the dates of

all editions. Ordinarily, the earliest editions are the most valuable, especially when the later editions are not authorized or signed by the artist.

To prevent later printing, artists and printers often intentionally deface the printing plate. This is called **canceling or striking the plate**. Sometimes they will make a print of the defaced plate as evidence that the plate was cancelled. A cancellation print may show a bold defacing cross across the graphics, proving no more prints can be made.

States

Whether due to wear with use or by the artist's intentional reworking, printing plates can change over time. These changes result in prints in different states. These changes may be minor or they may be extensive.

Intaglio plates often wear down during printing, resulting in later state prints that are lighter and with less detail.

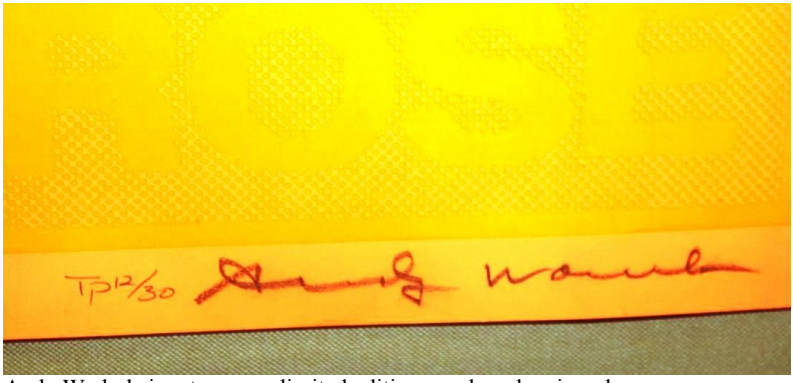
Printing plates and prints often went through several states. This is most commonly done during the creation of the printing plate, when the artist makes test prints, or proofs, in order to see how the work is coming.

After the first publication of a print, changes are sometimes made. If areas of an intaglio plate have worn down due to excessive printing, details may have to be put back in. In all types of prints, the text may be changed or the image cropped to suit a different purpose. Artists often feel compelled to embellish or change details of print for later editions.

Trading cards often come in different states, with a sports player's team or the coloring of the letters or borders changing during a long print run. In some cases a baseball card will come with different pictures of the player or with text errors changed. So the trading card collector is familiar with prints in different 'states' even if he or she was unfamiliar with the art term.

Artists' signatures
As mentioned, artists sometimes sign their prints, usually on numbered limited editions. Hand signing prints is a relatively modern phenomenon, starting in the 1800s. Original old Rembrandt and Albrecht Durer prints weren't autographed.

In modern times, the artist's hand signature on an original print shows that the print was personally approved as finished by the artist. The artist signs it when it's all finished and meets his or her approval. Prints that didn't come out right go unsigned and are often literally destroyed and tossed in the trash. This explains why art collectors pay more for a hand signed original print by a famous artist. The extra price is not just because it's an 'autograph,' but because the autographed indicates the print was personally okayed by the artist.



Andy Warhol signature on a limited edition numbered serigraph

In cases, a print of a print of a celebrity has both the signature of the celebrity and the artist. This is the case with some Andy Warhol screen prints, including prints of Mick Jagger, Wayne Gretzky and Pete Rose. Many prints by sports artist Leroy Neiman are signed by both Neiman and the athlete. The purchaser of the print often got the athlete's signature at an autograph show or private signing.

A hand signature by the artist does not in and of itself prove a print original. Many modern artists were celebrities during their lifetime and were asked by fans to sign reprint posters, postcards, books, photos and even baseballs. As with all celebrities, artists' signatures have been and will be forged, and expert opinion and your personal knowledge and experience with the signature is important.

In some cases an original print will come with a reputable autograph expert's letter of authenticity for the famous artist's autograph. While a useful document and nice to have, the LOA won't be for the overall print, just the autograph.

Clearly, autographs, autographs authenticity and who are reputable experts would be the subject for its own book, and this article won't go into that. It's up to you to know who are the respected autograph authenticators and for you to gain your own eye for an artist's signature.

However, as mentioned, the catalogues raisonne will detail which original prints are supposed to be artist signed and which were not. You may determine that a hand signature is fake because the artist's catalogue raisonne states that particular print wasn't signed by the artist and perhaps even was printed by his estate after his death. There is a commonly found series of Salvador Dali etchings that, while otherwise genuine, authorized by the artist and perfectly collectible, were never signed by him, yet are often often offered for sale with his 'signature' on the lower border. The prints are genuine but the signatures are fake, and Dali's catalogue raisonne would inform the collector of this.

(16)
16: Fine Art Prints: Handmade Printing Processes Exclusive to the Fine Arts

This following lists a few printing processes found almost exclusively in the fine arts. As artists are often experimenters there are other varied and sometimes wide types of prints. Some modern artists make xerox and laser print transfers, media prints (combining diverse processes, printing processes with paintings and/or photographs), collages, prints on unusual material (silk, metal, wood). The possibilities are too endless to be covered by this basic guide.

CLICHE-VERRE (GLASS PRINT)

Cliché-verre is not a print in any traditional sense. It is a cross between painting and photography. A glass plate is covered with ink or paint and a design is drawn with a brush or similar. A piece of photographic paper is placed beneath the glass and the glass is exposed to light. The final product is a photograph.

Cliché-verre was popular in the 1800s with such artists as Camille Corot, Theodore Rousseau and Eugene Delacrois. The most prominent 20th century user was Gyorgi Kepes.

MONOTYPE

A monotype is not a print in the traditional sense and does not require technical printing skill. It is sort of a cross between painting and printing, and is used exclusively in the fine arts. The monotype is made from a flat printing plate. On the printing plate, the artist draws or paints a design in ink. While the ink is wet, a piece of paper is place on top and pressure applied, either with a printing press or by hand.

The process is meant to produce a single (mono) print, but there is sometimes enough damp ink left on the plate surface to make a second, weaker impression. This second impression is called a 'ghost' and can be attractive on its own merit. To add more colors, designs and textures, the monotype might go through several printings from the same plate. As a result, some monotypes are sparse, while others are dense.

The monotype should not be confused with the **monoprint**. A monoprint also is a one-of-one print, but made differently. The monoprint is usually made with traditional printing processes, such as lithography, etching and woodcut. A monoprint is usually a mixed-media printing, meaning that it involves more that one type of printing and often hand coloring. Even if you can't always remember which is which, you can always remember that, whether monotype or monoprint, the print is unique.

COLLAGRAPH

A collagraph is a print made from a collage of items glued to a sheet of cardboard, metal or similar flat printing plate. It should not be confused with collotype, a photomechanical printing process described earlier in this book.

The collagraph is primarily used in the fine arts. Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris and Georges Braque were famous practitioners. The collagraph is a relatively modern form of printing, probably originating in the late 1800s.

A wide variety of objects can be attached to the plate to give a wide and wild variety of designs and textures. Common materials include cardboard cutouts, pieces of metal and wood, sand and glue. The collagraph plates can be printed in relief (meaning, the ink is placed on the highest parts), in intaglio (meaning, the ink is placed in the lowest parts) or both. The prints can have a plate mark that is typical to intaglio prints. Collagraphs are often combined with other printing methods, including lithography, woodcut, etching and hand coloring.

(17)
What is Authenticity?

In all areas of collecting, from movie memorabilia to oil paintings, something is authentic if its true identity is described accurately and sincerely.

If you pay good money for an “original 1930 Greta Garbo photograph by the famous Hollywood photographer George Hurrell,” you expect to receive an original 1930 Greta Garbo photo by George Hurrell. You don’t expect a 1970 reprint or a photo by an unknown photographer.

An item does not have to be rare or expensive or old to be authentic. It just has to be accurately and sincerely described. A cheapo modern reprint can be authentic if described as a cheapo modern reprint.

Errors in the description of an item are considered significant when they significantly affect the financial value or reasonable non-financial expectations of the buyer. An example of the reasonable non-financial expectations would involve a collector who specializes in real photo post cards of her home state of Iowa and makes it crystal clear to the seller that she only wants postcards depicting Iowa. Even if there is no financial issue, she would have reason to be disappointed if the purchased postcard turned out to show Oklahoma or Minnesota.

Many errors in description are minor and have little to no material effect. If that 1930 Greta Garbo photo turns out to be from 1934, it may not effect the financial value or desirability to the purchaser.

Common terms:

Counterfeit: a reprint or reproduction that is made to order fool others into believing it is original.

Forgery: an item that was made to fool others into believing it is something it is not. This includes counterfeits, but also made up

items, like a ‘newly discovered’ Rembrandt painting.

Fake: an item that is seriously misidentified. This includes forgeries and counterfeits. It also includes items that are innocently misidentified by collectors or sellers who are uninformed.

When in doubt about seller or maker’s intent, it is best to call a bad sale or auction item a fake instead of a forgery or counterfeit. All three words mean an item is not genuine, but forgery and counterfeit implies intentional illegality.

It is about making judgments

This book isn’t about becoming omniscient or gaining superhero powers of authentication. It’s about forming sound opinions based on your knowledge, experience, tools, research and common sense.

With many prints you will be confident to certain they are genuine.

With many prints you will be confident to certain they are fakes or otherwise have significant errors in description.

A percentage of prints you won’t be able to make a definitive opinion. Perhaps the print is outside your area of specialty. Perhaps the print has something strange about it, but not strange enough to prove it fake.

There is nothing wrong with being unsure. Even the experts at Christies sometimes scratch their heads and seek outside opinions. You should never be too proud to ask for second opinions or to say “I don't know.”

Judging authenticity is rarely done in a vacuum

For the collector, making judgments is usually done within a context. Usually the context is deciding whether or not to purchase and how much to pay.

A knowledgeable collector might take a wild chance on a foreign print if the price is $15 and it will look sharp on the wall, but pass if the price is $500. A collector might purchase an unfamiliar print if he knows the seller to be knowledgeable, but wouldn’t give it a second glace if the seller had a reputation for selling fakes.

You never have to buy a work of art or piece of memorabilia. If you

are uncomfortable with the looks of the item, the price or the reliability of the seller, you can choose not to bid or buy.

About the author

David Cycleback is an art and artifacts scholar and an internationally known authentication expert. He was a two-time Eric Hoffer Award Finalist for his books *Return Trip: Aesthetics and Epistemology* and *Conceits: Cognition and Perception,* the latter a standard text in university psychology, art and design courses. Reprinted by Beijing's Three Shadows Art Center, his guides *Judging the Authenticity of Prints by the Masters* and *Judging the Authenticity of Photographs* were the first comprehensive books on the subjects published in China. He has advised and examined material for major auction houses and institutions, was a writer for the standard academic reference Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography and teaches courses in art authentication. His other books include *Art Perception, A Brief Introduction to Ancient Counting Systems for Non-Mathematicians, Will She Come Back: Philosophy of Noise Music, Strange Beauty: Aesthetics and Epistemology, Forensic Light: A Beginner's Guide,* and *Identifying Common Materials in Antiques.* He has been cited by, amongst others, the Australian National Archives, Museum of Innovation and Science, Indiana Historical Society, Jewish Theological Seminary, Saylor Academy, University of Wisconsin (The Scout Project) and Sydney University (Business of Art).