

“Creating Block Printing Plates Using a Laser”

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Dr. Charles T. Weiss – ctweiss@clemsun.edu

Traditionally block printing plates are etched by hand. This is a long process that is very meticulous and often very frustrating. Today’s college students are very excited about the world of analog printing but are not very excited about hand etching a plate in linoleum or wood. The addition of a laser to etch the plates makes this process much more appealing to the students, while still keeping them excited about analog printing.

Students can now design original pieces of art in an illustration software and then instead of having to hand etch the details manually, they can use a laser etcher/cutter to engrave the wood or linoleum plate. The use of a laser to etch the plate speeds up the entire block printing process and is especially helpful to those students who do not have the desire or patience to hand etch a plate. The laser etching provides students the chance to move quickly from the digital world of their computer, to the analog world of hand printing.

This presentation will highlight some research conducted by students on this subject as well as research conducted by a faculty member. Specific details on the laser intensity as well as materials used to etch will also be included. Traditional wood was used to create the laser-etched wood blocks and linoleum was used to create the laser-etched lino blocks. The positives and negatives of both processes will be discussed in detail. Costs and specific material requirements will also be reviewed. Details on the laser etching machine will also be shared.

While some might say the art of block printing is tied to etching by hand, the laser etcher provides a safe manner in which to cleanly etch very high detailed imagery onto a wood or lino block. This use of the laser etching machine to create the blocks makes this printing process more accessible to students who are not enrolled in a traditional art program, but rather a graphic communication program that may not include fine art reproduction processes.

Keywords:

Block Printing

Laser Etching

Lino Prints

Wood Blocks