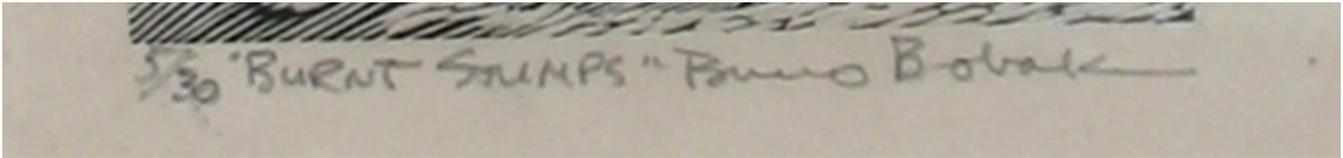


ORIGINAL MULTIPLES – Also called Limited Edition Prints

An **original multiple**, is an original work of art. It is different from a painting or drawing however, because of the way it is made. Where a painting is unique because the artist actually put the paintbrush on the surface in front of you, an original multiple is a printed impression of an image made on another surface called a plate. There are many ways to make the impression (outlined below) but in general, ink or paint is transferred from the plate to a porous surface (usually paper or textile.) Because the plate can be reused, multiple impressions can be made. The artist will decide how many impressions will be made within the edition. This number is based on the artist's expectations from the plate. Since a plate is very delicate, there are only so many prints that can be made before the plate degenerates and is unusable. (An etched plate will not usually last past 50 impressions for example, while a woodblock can sometimes produce as many as 200 prints.) Though multiple prints are made of an image, each inking is a unique process. Direct comparison of impressions from the same edition will reveal small, almost imperceptible differences that render each print a unique work of art.



In this example, Bruno Bobak created a print entitled Burnt Stumps.

The artist decided that it would be an edition of 30. This example is impression number 5 from that edition.

In some cases the entire edition is printed at one time, at which point the artist will usually score across or punch a hole through the plate, ending that edition. In other cases, the artist will print only a certain number of impressions and then keep the plate safely so as to be able to re-open the edition at a later time. Once the edition is completed, the artist then removes the plate from circulation. Some artists frame the plate with the last print in the series as a memento – as long as no further printings are possible. There can never be more prints than the original number decided upon.

The artist is responsible for keeping track of the number of impressions within any edition to ensure precise accuracy.

The artist will make a few proof prints to ensure that the plate looks as intended. The printer (who is often, though not always, the artist) may also make proofs. The number of proofs is usually around 10% of the total edition. Instead of a fraction as in the above example the print is marked **A.P.** (for 'Artist's Proof', or sometimes **M.P.** for 'Master Proof', **E.A.** for 'Epreuve Artist(e)' or other such variant.) The number of proofs is not included in the total number in the edition.

Original Multiples is the name now in common usage replacing **Limited Edition Print** to separate fine art prints (usually under 200 or so) from commercial prints in which the edition can be either unlimited or so large as to render the word 'limited' redundant.

INTAGLIO is a collective name for the process of printing from an image incised into a plate.

In the intaglio process, the entire plate is covered with colour (usually ink) and then wiped clean however the ink remains in the incisions. The plate is then pressed against paper with great pressure and the image is printed where ever the incisions have trapped the ink.

engraving is an intaglio process. The artist incises into a metal plate directly with a stylus. When the plate is inked and a print is made, the lines in the image appear where the ink is trapped in the incisions the artist made.

etching is an intaglio process. A metal plate is covered with a wax ground. The artist then draws the image in the wax with a stylus, exposing the metal. The plate is then placed in an acid bath – the acid etches the metal where ever it is exposed. Ink is then applied and the image appears from where the ink is trapped where the artist incised.

mezzotint is an intaglio process, a variant of engraving. There are two variations of mezzotint: In the *dark to light* method, the entire surface of the metal plate is roughened with many tiny dots made with a tool like a very fine comb. The artist then forms the image by smoothing the roughened plate. This is a tonal process since different tones can be achieved by smoothing more or less. In the *light to dark* method the artist creates the image directly with the roughening tool. Mezzotint was the first printing technique to generate tonal variations – this is achieved by smoothing (or roughing) the plate differently.

aquatint (so called because Latin for acid is *aqua fortis*) is an intaglio process, a variant of etching. The metal plate is dusted with a resin that is acid resistant. The plate is then heated and the dust particles adhere to the plate. When the plate is immersed in acid, marks are made on the plate around each microscopic particle of dust. The artist uses an asphaltum (tar) laquer to stop-out certain sections and thus create the image. If the laquer is applied before the first acid wash then no incision is made and at printing the area will be without colour. In subsequent acid washes the artist stops out areas that have achieved the level of incision to create the desired image tone. The length of time the plate is in the acid bath determines the depth of the incision and therefore the darkness when it comes to printing. For this reason aquatint is a tonal process because subtle variations in tone can be achieved.

drypoint is an intaglio process, a variant of engraving.

RELIEF is a collective name for a group of processes in which the image is formed on the paper by inking an original image on the plate (or matrix) where the negative spaces in the image are carved into the matrix. In other words, the areas to show white on the printed paper are incised out of the plate. (A regular ink-stamp is an example.) This contrasts to the Intaglio process in which the ink image is printed from the incisions themselves.

woodcut or **woodblock** this is a relief technique in which an image is carved out of a block of wood, along the grain. The block is then inked and the fabric or paper (usually moistened) is placed on top of the block and then rubbed with a *baren* – a disk shaped pad. Some wood cut prints are black and white; if the artist intends to make a coloured print, a different matrix is cut for each colour to be included in the final print. This technique is several thousand years old.

lino(linoleum)cut this is a modern variant of the wood cut originally developed by the German art collective *Die Brücke* in the first decade of the 20th century. The process is identical to the woodcut but because of the nature of linoleum the marks have a different texture. Linocuts and woodcuts therefore exist side-by-side as similar but different print-making techniques

wood engraving is another relief technique, similar in most ways to the woodcut, but differing in that the artist carves the image into the **end** grain of the wood. The wood is much harder along this axis and this therefore produces a different texture in the printed image. This too is a comparatively modern technique, originating in the late 18th century.

monoprint and **monotype** are two printmaking techniques that only ever produce one print of each plate. The plates are any non-porous material – usually metal or more commonly, glass.

- A **monoprint** plate has *some* etched marks on it (see **etching** above). But the etching is only part of the image-making: the artist paints onto the plate other elements that, when printed, constitute the image. The permanent marks on the plate (the etched incisions) remain for the artist to use again. However, because the defining characteristics were only painted onto the original plate, when pressed against the paper they are destroyed (hence monoprints are only ever 1/1.) When the artist uses the plate to make subsequent prints, each print will vary since the painted elements are unique to each plate. An artist may therefore produce similar monoprints, but no two will be identical.
- A **monotype** plate has no permanent marks whatsoever. The artist paints an image directly onto the plate and then prints that plate onto paper. This process is closest to painting with the extra step creating a mirror image of the painting on the plate. Artists who might otherwise paint directly onto paper or canvas, choose this technique since the mirror effect and the slight uncertainty of how much paint will transfer introduce an element of chance and play into the artwork's creation.

Lithograph is a simple and widely used technique for making prints. The artist creates the image with an oil based lithograph crayon or paint on a large flat porous stone (usually limestone.) The entire stone is then moistened with water. Where the stone is not covered by the lithograph paint, it absorbs the water. Oil paint is then spread onto the stone. The oil paint adheres to the oil-based lithograph marks while it is repelled by the water in the uncovered stone. Paper is then pressed against the stone. The image is formed by the paper picking up the oil paint that rests on top of the lithograph marks.

Silkscreen technique, also called **Serigraphy**, employs a sheet of material (traditionally silk, now more commonly nylon) on which the image is blocked-out using wax or glue (or similar impermeable adhesive substance.) Ink is then squeezed over the screen onto the paper beneath, only reaching the paper where the glue or wax does not block the ink. The image is formed either by the ink or in the space defined by the ink. As with colour woodcut prints, each colour has a separate screen. The artist therefore builds the image from lighter colours to dark.

Silkscreen using emulsion blocking technique is a modern development in the silkscreen process. It *is* true serigraphy. The only difference is in the creation of the blocking that is on the screen itself: Instead of using glue resist to create the desired areas (image) on the screen, the image is first made on a transparency in black ink. This transparency is then placed on the screen which has been covered with a photo-sensitive emulsion. This set up is then exposed to light. The areas of the photo-sensitive emulsion that are exposed to the light will turn hard and fix, the areas covered beneath the black areas will not fix. When the screen is then washed, the hardened emulsion will stay fixed on the screen while the rest of the screen washes clean. The hardened emulsion in this process acts as the glue in the other process. From here the process is the same as traditional serigraphy. The key difference between this method (photo-emulsion) and the more traditional method (glue/wax) of blocking on the screen is that a glue resist will withstand, at the most, 100 printings (because the glue/wax disintegrates on the screen) whereas the emulsion will withstand over 10,000 impressions. In this situation an artist will choose to limit the number of images produced so as to preserve the integrity of the edition. This is a contentious issue in contemporary art circles.

What about reproductions?

Prints have become a misunderstood and mistrusted art form recently due to the confusion over reproductions and original prints. A reproduction, although often called a print, is actually quite different. It is a copy of a work of art conceived by the artist in another medium such as an oil painting or watercolour that has been mechanically photo-reproduced. It can be signed and numbered, as original prints are, but invariably with a much larger number (250 - 1000 or more) in the edition. Numbering and signing a reproduction does not change its essence; it is still a reproduction of a painting and not an original print.