Monotype Printing

Try printmaking to create a one-of-a-kind creation!

Monotype printing is a technique in which there is only one image created. Artists will carve or draw an image on a material called a plate. The image is then transferred with ink to a piece of paper. A monotype print is valuable because it is one-of-a-kind. Copies can be similar, but they are not exactly the same. Compare and contrast the printmaking techniques of two artists, then try making your own monotype print.

Artist Bertha Lum is known for creating scenes that include water, boats and trees. Her work gives us a glimpse into everyday life. Does this look like a boating dock area for sailboats? Do you think the boats just set sail, or are they returning from a long journey?

Bertha Lum used a woodblock printing technique that she learned when she traveled and studied art in Japan. She added watercolor paints with a paintbrush to her prints to blend colors. The trees are different shades of brown and green. The water and the sky fade to light blue and white. Each artwork is one-of-a-kind because she carefully blended the colors and paints each time she made a new print.
Artist Louis Lozowick used the lithography printmaking technique for his work. Lithography printmaking works like this: the surface of the plate on which the image is originally drawn is smooth. The material used for drawing the image is an oily or greasy substance. The inks used are water-based. Did you know that oil and water do not mix? When the image is transferred to paper, the oily substance repels the ink. This process allows the artist to create lots of detail. **What details do you notice in Lozowick’s print?**

Using the lithography printmaking process, you can create multiple prints. However, Lozowick carefully prints each image to make sure the ink is the right level of lightness or darkness, and that all the details show up as he intended. His lithograph prints are unique works of art.

Imagine you are standing on the ground in this urban scene. Does it look like you are standing under something? There is a lot of architecture (built elements) included. There is also a lot of geometry. Do you see many squares, rectangles and circles? In cityscapes, we often see shapes repeated, such as the windows on a building. This can make a scene look very busy. Think about the shapes and patterns you might draw when you create your print.

Materials:

- Laminated clear sheet – your printing plate
- 3 sheets of white paper
- Ink – 2 colors
- 2 small spoons
- Roller
- Tools for drawing – popsicle sticks, Q-tips and toothpicks
- Small squares of thick paper to cut stencils

How to Make a Monoprint:

1. First, using your spoon, put a little ink (about ½ inch in diameter) onto your clear sheet that we will consider to be your printing plate.

2. Use your roller to spread the paint across the printing plate. Spread it thin by rolling in all directions, up and down, left and right.

3. Draw your design into the ink using one of the drawing tools (popsicle stick, Q-tip, toothpick) to create your picture. Try using your finger! Sometimes that is the best tool.
   - Experiment with creating thick, thin, wavy or straight lines.
   - Experiment with texture. Try repeating a mark to create a pattern.
4. Optional: Try making a stencil to add a different design to your monoprint. Using a square of thick paper, cut out a shape and place it on top of your printing plate after you draw your design. It will stick when it touches because the paint is wet. Your stencil will create negative space and that shape will stay white when you print your final image.

5. Carefully lay a piece of paper on top of the printing plate. Smooth and press gently across the entire surface to make sure the paint is coated evenly. Don't forget the corners!

6. Lift the paper up. You will see your printed image on your paper! Each monotype print is unique because you only get one vivid and bright impression.

7. Try making another one. Repeat the steps and try creating a new design.