

# GRAPHIC TECHNIQUES

## → **RELIEF PRINT**

Relief printing is the oldest printing technique. The artist cuts away or removes the areas of a plate or block which are to stay white. The remaining surface of the block is then inked and pressed on paper as a "stamp".

Examples of this technique are woodcuts and wood engravings.

## → **INTAGLIO PRINT**

This technique involves a plate in which the artist etched lines. To print these lines, the whole plate is inked, and the ink is then wiped away from the surface, so that it remains only in the grooves.

Examples of this technique are engraving, etching and drypoint.

### **Engraving**

The engraving is the predecessor of the etching. Grooves are incised on a copper, steel or zinc plate by means of various engraving tools or sharp chisels. The plate (matrix) is laid on a sack of sand in order to prevent any injury to the engraver. The plate can be turned into various angles so that the engraver can go on with his incising work. This technique of reproduction makes a large quantity of prints possible.

### **Etching**

At the time that engraving had become a common technique, artists discovered that metal reacts to a strong acid or other chemical, which bites itself into a metal plate. This process was called etching and proved its use in printing books. Etching is an intaglio technique in which the image is drawn into a wax ground which covers the copper or zinc plate. The lines of the design are then bitten into the exposed parts of the plate in an acid bath and printed after inking on a moistened sheet of paper.

### **Drypoint**

Drypoint is an intaglio technique in which the design is not bitten into the plate by means of an acid, but is applied by means of a hard steel or diamond needle, which cuts straight into the metal. When the artist scratches the metal plate in this way, a burr is formed, thrown up at the edge of the incised line. This burr will hold the ink

and produces a characteristically soft, dense line that differentiates drypoint from other intaglio methods. Drypoints yield very small editions (10 to 15), unlike with etchings, because the pressure of printing destroys the typical burr. The artist can make more prints with a copper plate than with a zinc plate, because copper is a harder metal.

### → ***PLANOGRAPHIC PRINTING TECHNIQUES***

This technique involves printing from a flat surface, a stone or metallic plate and rubber, from which the inked part does not differ in relief from the part that has not been inked. The artist simply uses oil or fat to divide the smooth surface into regions which accept the ink, and regions which reject it and become the background.

This method is applied with lithography (lithos = stone). The advantage of lithographs is that one can produce an unlimited number of prints. Lithography is popular with a lot of artists today.