

# HOW TO MAKE A LINOCUT PRINT

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## \* Preparation for printing

- To develop your idea for a print, start with the imagery resources you have created and/or accumulated so far in class. Perhaps you will want to use one of your drawings, such as the negative space ink drawing, for a linocut composition.....or your recent painting(s) as the basis for a series extended to this printing process.
- Make a clear contour line drawing with a soft pencil on tracing paper.
- Decide what format you want, (max. 8 x 10 in this class) then cut a sheet of linoleum to size
- Transfer your drawing to the plate by flipping the drawing face down and rubbing the back to transfer the pencil lines to the plate. This method reverses the image so that when it is printed it is reversed again so the print will match your original drawing. An alternate method is to use carbon or other transfer paper between your drawing and the plate but you must remember to trace your drawing face down to end up with the reversed image on the plate.
- Trace over your pencil lines with ink so that you won't smear the drawing while cutting the plate.

## \* Cutting the plate.

- Keep in mind - the areas that will be inked on the plate are the areas *not* cut. You will be cutting the spaces between the lines, shapes and textures of your drawing.
- You may want to use a heating pad under the linoleum as it helps make the linoleum more pliable and easier to cut.
- Cut away from yourself using even pressure. Be careful not to undercut narrow or small shapes.
- Periodically test the sharpness of your cutting tool by running it over your thumbnail; if the tool slips, sharpen it until, on another try, it sticks. Tools dull quickly because of the grit in the linoleum material. Dull tools lead to slipping, risking unwanted lines or cut hands.
- Sharpen by holding the tool close to its beveled edge against a sharpening stone and moving it in an elliptical motion with the wrist stiff so that the bevel remains flat against the stone. If available, sharpen first on an India stone with light oil; then polish on an Arkansas hardstone. To remove the burr after polishing, jab the tool into a piece of soft wood.
- Decide how much margin you want between the image and the outside edges of the paper. Measure and cut several sheets of paper to size.
- Cut a backing board to a size that allows space on the board, left and bottom, for the amount of margin chosen for the paper, thus creating a guide for registering the paper so that the image will be centered on your paper after printing.
- Mount your plate, using Elmer's glue or similar adhesive, to the board allowing space for the pre-determined left and bottom margins. Weight with a heavy book so that it dries flat.
- After the bond is secure, you are ready to ink the plate.

### **\* Inking the plate**

- Put a gob of ink onto a glass plate or other perfectly smooth surface. Roll out the ink by running the brayer back and forth over it to evenly distribute the ink over the entire surface of the brayer.

- Ink the plate by rolling the brayer over your plate. Examine the surface to make sure all areas of the plate are evenly inked.

- Always rest your brayer roller side up.

### **\* Printing**

- Using the border of the board as a guide, hold the paper up higher at the upper right and drop the paper down carefully, aligning it at the bottom left corner of the board, or other margin guide, and along the bottom and the left edges.

- Gently smooth the paper over the inked surface so it will not slip

- Begin to rub the back of the paper(s) with a wood or metal spoon or a baren.

Use small circular motions until you are sure that all area of the plate have been rubbed evenly. You might need to lay a sheet of tracing paper over top if the rubbing is abrading the printing paper surface.

- Before lifting the paper, lift one corner and check the quality of the transfer. If it is too light or uneven, let the paper back down and continue to rub with more, and more even, pressure.

- Lift the paper to reveal your print.

\* Re-ink the plate for each successive print. You will need to clean your plate if your images begin to lose clarity.

### **\* Clean up**

- Remove excess ink from your roller by running it back and forth over newsprint or other expendable paper. Lay paper over your plate and, by rubbing, transfer the remaining ink to the paper.

- Wipe off all remaining traces of ink with a wet rag or use an appropriate solvent if using oil based ink. Allow to dry then store flat.