In Good Company

An exhibition of lithography works by John Snow from
the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Collection

In Good Company

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Left image

Beach
John Snow
1972
Lithograph on paper
72.1 x 53 cm
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About

The Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The TREX program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare centres, and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The TREX program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the artwork of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations coordinate the program for the AFA:

REGION ONE – Northwest: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

REGION TWO – Northeast / North Central: The Art Gallery of Alberta

REGION THREE – Southwest: The Alberta Society of Artists

REGION FOUR – Southeast: The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

The
Alberta
Society
of
Artists

TREX

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)

Beginning in 1972, the Alberta Art Collection was proposed as an opportunity to support and encourage Alberta artists by purchasing original works, as well as creating a legacy collection for the people of Alberta.

As a crown agency of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act was later established in 1991 with a mandate to support the arts in Alberta. This mandate is accomplished by providing persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta; fostering and promoting the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists; collecting, preserving and displaying works of art by Alberta artists; and encouraging artists resident in Alberta to continue their work.

The Alberta Society of Artists (ASA)

The Alberta Society of Artists is a large part of Alberta's visual arts history, through its members, its exhibitions and other initiatives. The ASA was founded in 1931, making it the oldest society of juried professional artists in the province.

The ASA is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for excellence. Through exhibition, education and communication the society increases public awareness of the visual arts.

The ASA is contracted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to develop and circulate the TREX exhibitions to communities throughout southwest Alberta.

Exhibition Statement

In 1953, bank manager and artist, Dr. John Snow, discovered that a Calgary commercial printing company had discarded two lithography presses and some printing stones in their back alley to be hauled away.[1] Dr. Snow purchased the presses for fifteen dollars and set them up in his basement studio.[2] At the time, no one in Alberta and very few people in Canada were using lithography for art-making purposes. After seeking out some training from an experienced American printmaker, he further relied on books from the library along with trial and error to better learn the multistep process.[3] Lithography is a long, involved and complicated process, but at its essence is based on the simple premise that oil and water do not mix. Once the flat limestone slab is smoothed and prepared with a special grit, a greasy material (a waxy ink known as tusche) is used to "draw" on the clean, flat slab of limestone. The slab is then wetted, inked up and then the paper is run through the press one layer at a time.[4]

It was not long before Dr. Snow mastered lithography and began to use it for its aesthetic potential. Dr. Snow's landscapes, florals, still lifes and figurative artworks have been described as, "often experimental within the context of his time and place" and "emotionally expressive and colourful."[5] This is evident in the figurative prints selected for this exhibition from the collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Each print combines rich layers of saturated colours, simple patterns and textures created using found objects. His subject matter, a combination of portraiture and still life, is traditional, but he represents it through a modernist lens. Colour is used for its expressive potential and his flat, asymmetrical backgrounds are characteristic of post-impressionist artists, as well as the contemporary American avant-garde artists of his time.[6] The figurative artworks in this exhibition are not indicative of a specific place. Instead, they were created using a composite of memories.

Dr. Snow's initial investment in the two presses yielded a significant return. Throughout his fifty-year career, he created hundreds of expressive prints and acted as a mentor to many of his contemporaries. *In Good Company* reflects Dr. Snow's innovative use of the lithography printmaking process and he has made a lasting "impression" on printmaking in Alberta.

–Shannon Bingeman, Curator

Figures
John Snow
1968
Lithograph on paper
55.6 x 45.6 cm
Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

[1] Bente Roed Cochran, "Part III: Alberta Print Artists," "John Snow," in *Printmaking in Alberta 1945–1985* (The University of Alberta Press: 1989), 137.
[2] Ibid., "Maxwell Bennett Bates," 54.
[3] Nancy Townshend, "John Snow," in *A History of Art in Alberta 1905–1970*, (Calgary: Bayeux Arts Inc., 2005), 104–107.
[4] Lithography is a complicated and multistep process; see the Resources section for further reading and a video about this unique type of printing.
[5] Elizabeth Herbert, interviewed by Ashley Slemming, personal interview, August 14, 2020. (Elizabeth Herbert is the author of *The Art of John Snow* published by the University of Calgary Press in 2011).
[6] Ibid.

Artist Biography

John Harold Thomas Snow was born in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1911. As a young boy, he moved to England with his family until their return to Canada in 1919 after the First World War. In 1921, his family settled on a farm west of Innisfail, Alberta and five years later (at age 15) he told his father he wanted "to be a painter or a banker," and later had successful careers as both.[7] In 1928, he joined the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) beginning his career as a banker which lasted 43 years until his retirement at age 60. His time with RBC was interrupted only once, with his enlistment and overseas tour during the Second World War. This time spent overseas provided opportunities for him to visit some of the world's great museums, profoundly influencing his art and life.[8]

During Snow's time back in Calgary after the war, he began studying life drawing under Maxwell Bates and experimenting with woodblock printing techniques. Dr. Snow was interested in the best and most progressive techniques to refine his own printmaking skills and establish his formal printmaking practice; independently, he sought out training from Glen Alps, an experienced American printmaker and educator. Dr. Snow exhibited nationally and internationally during his lifetime in print and graphics biennials, as well as in solo and group gallery shows. His landscapes, still lifes, florals and portraits in lithography, watercolour, oil, mixed media, concrete sculpture, textiles and intaglio relief helped usher Alberta into the modernist period.

Dr. Snow worked diligently and prolifically until 1992 and died peacefully in 2004. The awards bestowed upon him are numerous; notable among them are an honorary doctorate from the University of Calgary (1984), the Alberta Achievement Award from the provincial government (1984), and the Alberta Order of Excellence (1996). His work is held in many collections, some of which are the Glenbow Museum, the Art Gallery of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England. In 2001, Dr. Snow's two-storey home in Lower Mount Royal (Calgary), where he lived and worked for nearly 50 years, was purchased by Calgary author Jackie Flanagan to accommodate writers who took part in the Markin-Flanagan Distinguished Writers Program. As of 2010, the John Snow House is administered by The New Gallery. It holds a resource centre (a combined library and archive), hosts an artist-in-residence program and is available for community events.[9]

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[7] Brian Brennan, "John Snow an Homage," *Galleries West*, December 31, 2002, https://www.gallerieswest.ca/magazine/stories/john-snow%2C-an-homage/.

[8] "John Snow," *The Collector's Gallery: Fine Canadian Art*, accessed August 13, 2020, http://www.collectorsgalleryofart.com/dynamic/artist_bio.asp?artistid=11.

[9] "John Snow," The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) Art Collection, accessed May 26, 2020, http://alberta.emuseum.com/people/2441/john-snow.

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Skopje
John Snow
1967
Lithograph on paper
55.6 x 45.7 cm
Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

Jean
John Snow
1965
Lithograph on paper
55.6 x 45.7 cm
Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

Player
John Snow
1965
Lithograph on paper
66 x 52.1 cm
Collection of the Alberta
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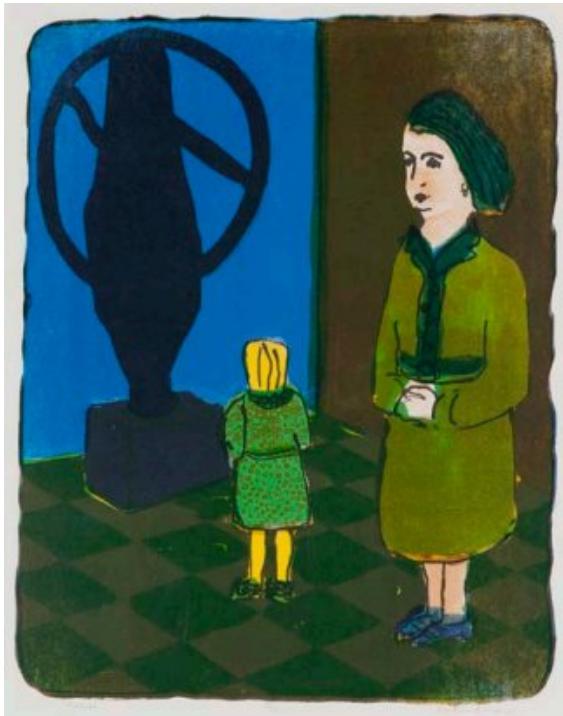
Figures
John Snow
1968
Lithograph on paper
55.6 x 45.6 cm
Collection of the Alberta
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Top

Creta Beach
John Snow
1972
Lithograph on paper
52.5 x 72.1 cm
Collection of the Alberta
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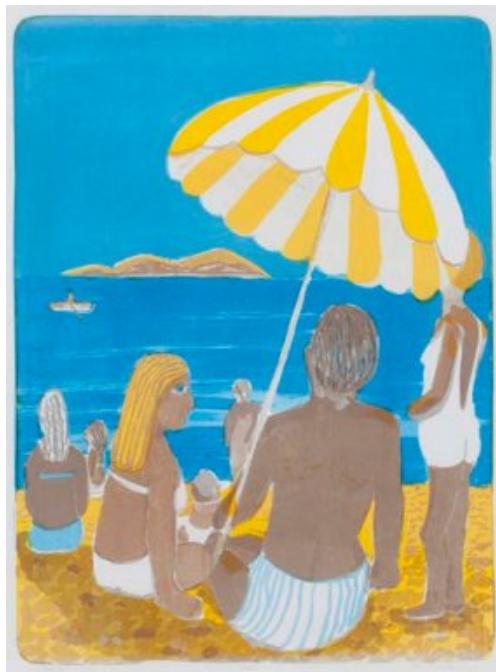
Bottom left

Beach
John Snow
1972
Lithograph on paper
72.1 x 53 cm
Collection of the Alberta
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Bottom right

Country Place
John Snow
1973
Lithograph on paper
65.6 x 52.5 cm
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Top

Matilda
John Snow
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Lithograph on paper
46 x 62.9 cm
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Valencia
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Lithograph on paper
50.5 x 35.6 cm
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Odette
John Snow
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Lithograph on paper
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Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

Top

Gallery
John Snow
1980
Lithograph on paper
52.2 x 70.3 cm
Collection of the Alberta
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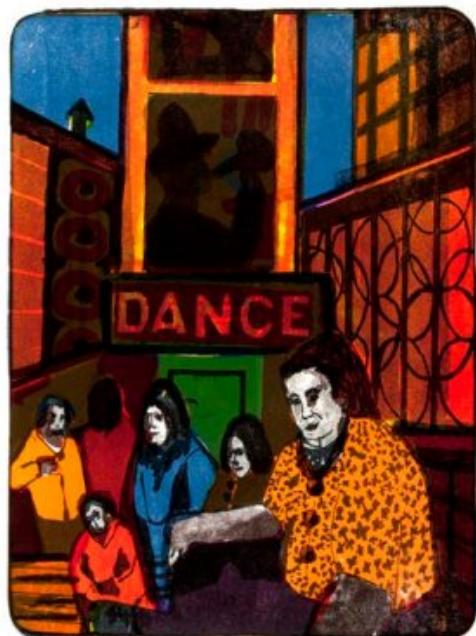
Bottom left

Band
John Snow
n.d.
Lithograph on paper
55.7 x 45.6 cm
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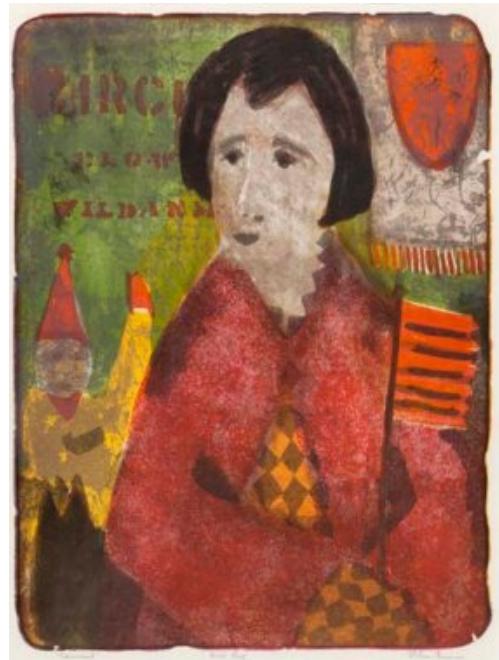
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Carnival
John Snow
1963
Lithograph on paper
60.5 x 51.2 cm
Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

Top

Exhibition
John Snow
1983
Lithograph on paper
53.5 x 75.6 cm
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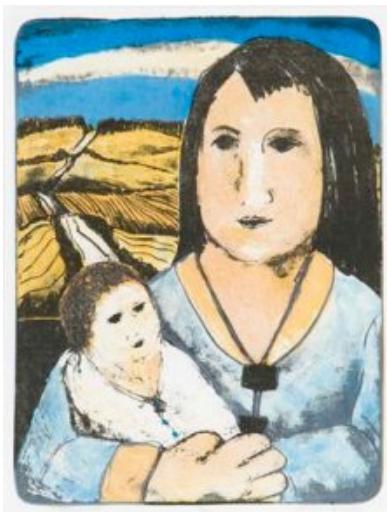
Bottom left

Allensmore
John Snow
n.d.
Lithograph on paper
46.8 x 35.4 cm
Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

Middle

Stained Window
John Snow
1965
Lithograph on paper
55.7 x 46.6 cm
Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

Bottom right

Kalmar
John Snow
n.d.
Lithograph on paper
47.3 x 36.2 cm
Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

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Education Guide

This education guide is comprised of activities to move the audience through the various themes presented in the exhibition *In Good Company*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been carefully developed and designed to enhance the curriculum set by Alberta Education. The guide includes questions for discussion, vocabulary and activities designed for the level of ability, understanding and complexity of the participants:

Beginner – participants who are just beginning their exploration of art.

Intermediate – participants who have some experience looking at and creating art.

Advanced – participants who have much experience looking at and creating art.

Throughout the Education Guide, you will find key concepts, words and terms emphasized that can be found in the Vocabulary section.

Discussion Questions

Below are questions that are intended to prompt meaningful discussion about the content presented in the exhibition *In Good Company*. The questions can be selected and the vocabulary altered to suit the appropriate age level.

How are the lithography *artworks of Dr. John Snow reminiscent of community and bonds shared between people?*

What kind of relational values can be inferred in the artworks, Country Place, Allensmore, *and* Matilda*? Can you identify which compositions are intended to depict individuals that may know each other, versus compositions showing public spaces with strangers interacting?*

The places that Dr. John Snow painted his subjects are not representative of specific locations, but do they remind you of any places that you have visited? Are some of the activities shown in the artworks familiar to you?

You might notice that Dr. Snow's compositions are not realistic representations of objects or people and that many of the details in the faces or the environments are simplified. This approach in an artwork is called an artist's style. *When you look at each of the artworks, what else do you notice that might be part of the artist's style?*

The artist plays with many different colour combinations and an assortment of textures *in his artworks, each achieving different results. With that in mind, can you identify which colour combinations and textures are bold? Which are soft? Notice the images that stand out to you and try to identify why.*

Engagement Activities

Partner Portraits

As an early printmaker in Alberta, Dr. John Snow (along with a few other notable artists in the province) worked hard to build up a community for the arts. *Printmaking* in Alberta continues today as a highly community-based artistic medium, largely due to printmaking equipment being far too expensive and large for one individual to purchase and host in their studios alone. Many printmakers collaborate and develop community studios and collectives to share costs and equipment. As a reflection on the community and the relational nature of printmaking, have participants pair up with a partner and sketch each other's portraits for ten minutes. Any medium can be used–paint, crayons or pencils–and if desired, the portrait sketches can be translated into the Beginner Lesson Plan which is a printmaking activity.

Math in the Gallery

Alongside his artistic practice, Dr. Snow was also a banker for much of his life. As banking processes are quite mathematical and many people believe art to not involve very much math at all, some might be surprised by these two career paths paralleling one another. There is *in fact* quite a lot of math involved in art-making! For this activity, give one large sheet of poster paper to groups of two or three participants and have them measure the paper size. Next, task each group with dividing the paper into equal sections for the number of participants in the group. Ask them to draw a faint line in pencil using a ruler separating each measured section and assign one section to each group member. The participants can then take turns drawing a portion of a person or animal into these sectioned areas of the page–one group member can draw the torso, the next group member can draw the legs and so on. Encourage the use of bright coloured markers to create their work, inspired by bright colours Dr. Snow used in many of his artworks.

Shared Supply Sculptures

As mentioned previously, printmakers often share studio space and equipment, which builds community and helps to balance out costs for individual artists. For this activity, a teacher or coordinator will need to create a variety of different workstations for groups of three or four participants. Each workstation should have one unique sculpting tool (possible tools: a textured stamp, a rolling pin, a spoon, a fork, a key or a potato masher). Provide each group with enough modelling clay for each individual participant to make their own sculptures but instruct them that they must share the sculpting tool to create their individual artworks. After the activity, ask participants to identify both the challenges and benefits of sharing tools and working collaboratively when art-making.

Beginner Lesson Plan

Styrofoam Relief Prints

You will notice by looking at each of the artworks featured in this exhibition that Dr. Snow primarily used the printmaking technique of *lithography*. Lithography is a very old printing technique; however, it is not the oldest. Some of the earliest traditional printmaking techniques include *relief* printmaking and *intaglio*, whereas lithography and *silkscreen* (also known as serigraphy) were discovered later.[10]

In this lesson plan, participants will be provided with a basic introduction to printmaking using mostly materials that can be found around the house. After completing this activity, participants will be able to create multiples of one drawing through a simple relief print process using Styrofoam as the printing plate.

Materials

Styrofoam meat or veggie trays, scissors, dull wooden pencils, paper to print on, acrylic paint or relief block printing ink, piece of Plexiglas to roll the ink out on and a rubber printing brayer (ink-rollers that can be found at art supply stores).

Note: If printing *brayers* are difficult to access you can substitute small paint rollers, foam paintbrushes or a spatula. If you do not have a piece of Plexiglas, you can carefully use the glass from an old photo frame and tape around the edges with masking tape, so it will not be sharp to handle.

Preparation

Prepare meat or veggie trays by thoroughly washing them to ensure they are safe for handling. Cut the edges and corners off so that the Styrofoam is completely flat–the Styrofoam is now the printing plate for this activity. Review the terms *relief printing*, *brayer*, *print edition* and (printing) *plate*.

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[10] Bente Roed Cochran, "Part I: Canadian Printmaking and Its Influence on Alberta Printmakers," "Exposure: National and International Exhibition Opportunities," in *Printmaking in Alberta 1945–1985* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press,1989), 9.

Instructions

Step 1   Have participants decide on an image to print, for example, a portrait of a friend or an animal, or a still life of an object or some plants. The image could also be an *abstract* drawing. Note that the final image will print in reverse to the initial drawing because the printing plate is flipped over during the printing stage.

Step 2   Draw the design onto the Styrofoam using a dull wooden pencil (a sharp pencil will pierce through the Styrofoam). Keep in mind that once the pencil has made an indent, this will end up printing. There is no erasing or going back after a mark is made!

Step 3   To prepare ink for printing, use relief block printing ink or acrylic paint and place a small amount onto a sheet of Plexiglas or glass, then using the rubber brayer roll it over the ink until it is evenly coated and there are no lumps of paint on the roller.

Step 4   Cover the Styrofoam design with paint or ink by rolling the brayer over its surface area.

Step 5   Turn over the inked Styrofoam printing plate onto a sheet of blank paper. Be careful not to readjust the position once the ink has touched the paper, as this will smudge the print.

Step 6   Participants will then use their fists or palms to press the Styrofoam down onto the paper evenly. Press down on all the corners and surface area of the printing plate. A clean brayer can also be used for this step.

Step 7   Carefully and gently pull the Styrofoam away from the paper, revealing the print on the paper!

Step 8   Repeat steps 3 through 7 to create an edition of prints, also known as art *multiples*.
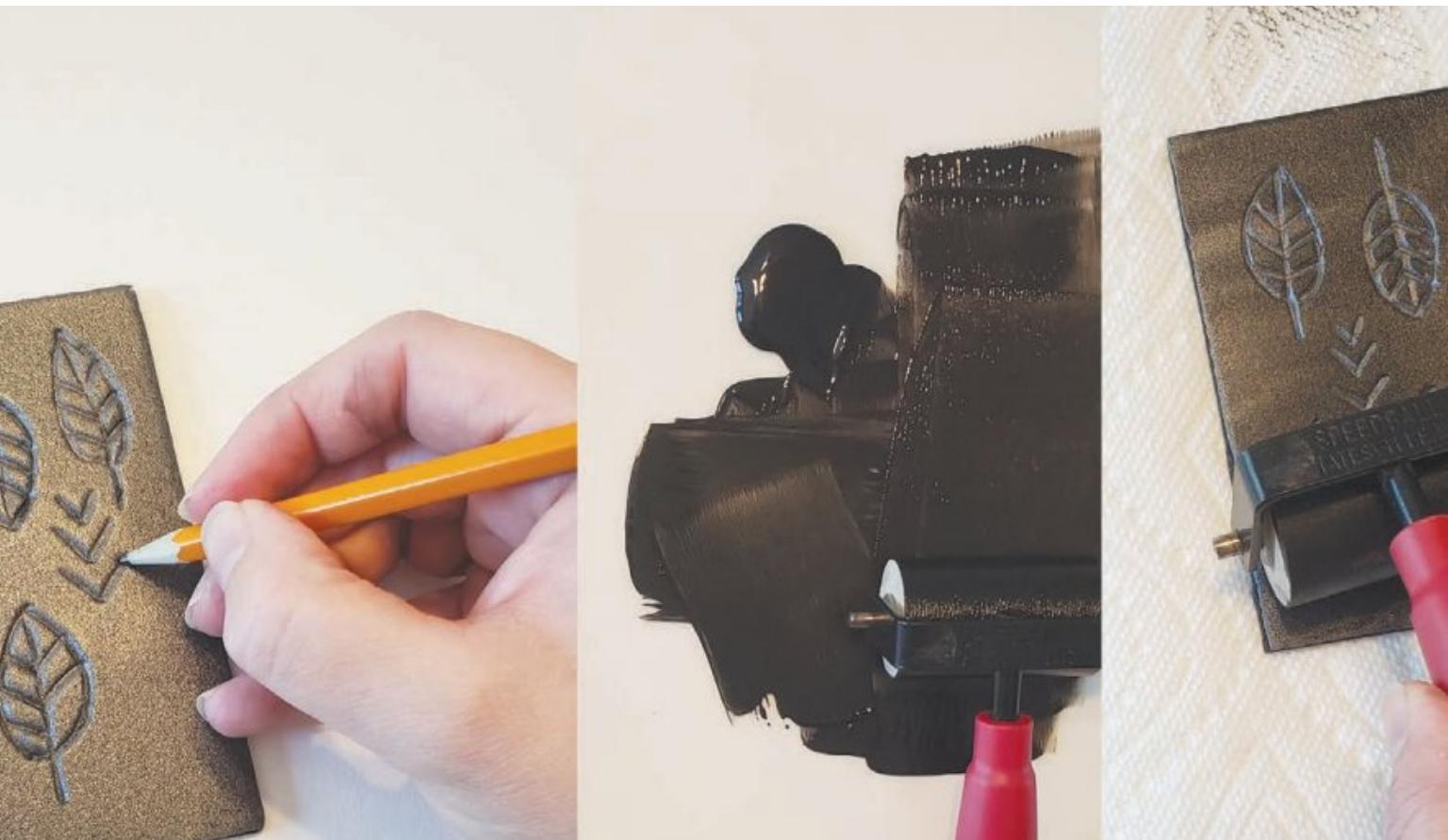
Discussion Questions

How is the process of printmaking different from other art-making materials and techniques like painting or drawing?

Do you think it is fun to create multiples of the same image? Why?

Having completed this beginner printmaking lesson, what might you try differently if you were to complete the activity a second time with a new Styrofoam printing plate?
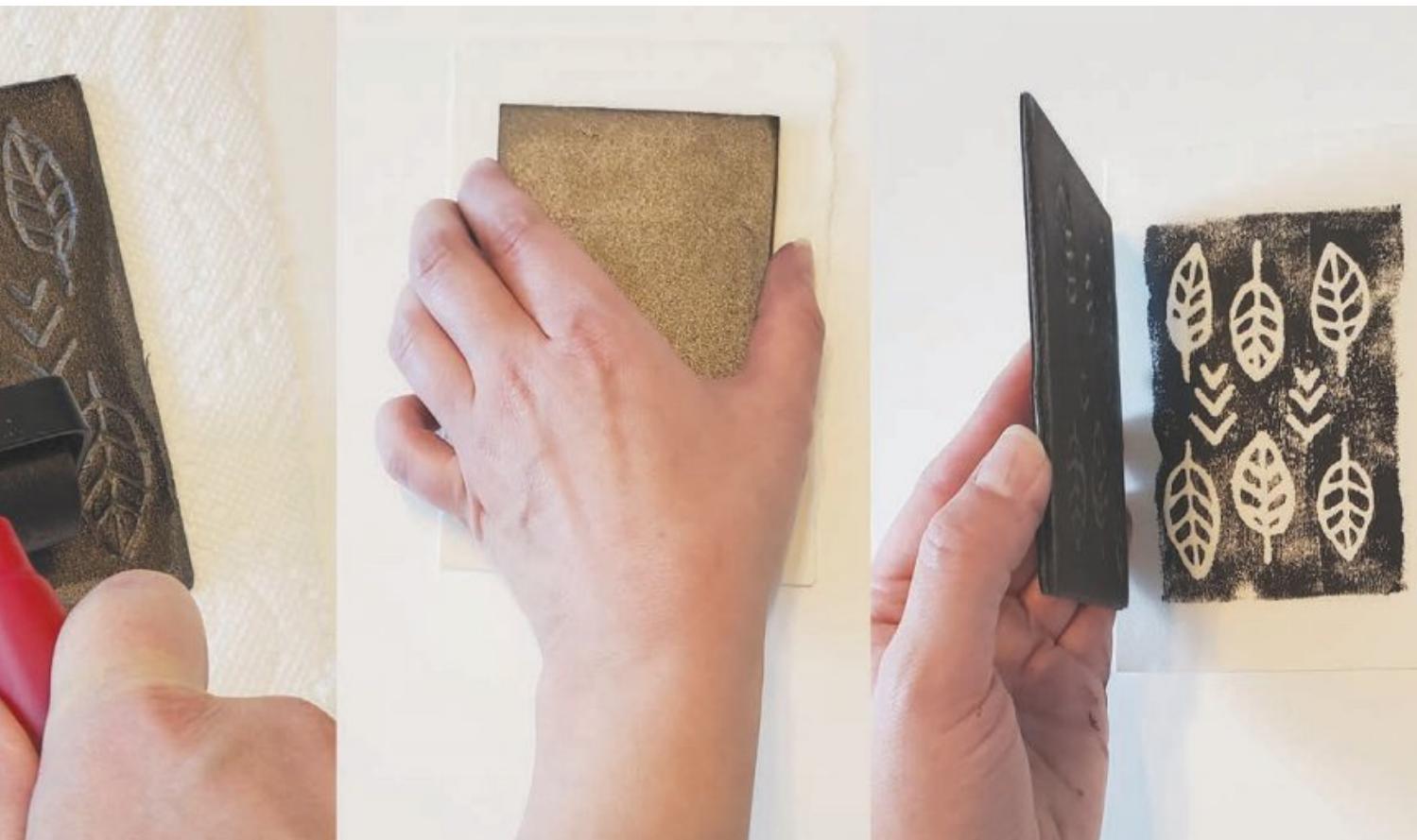
Variations

Provide participants with multiple pieces of Styrofoam and have them develop three or four printing plates that can be layered on top of one another in different colours to create one complete image. For example, one printing plate could be yellow flowers, a second printing plate could be green leaves, and a third printing plate could be red ladybugs–printed on top of one another it will create a multicoloured print.

Cut out shapes of Styrofoam and glue them to wooden blocks; these can be printed more like stamps. Multiple Styrofoam shapes can also be glued onto a rolling pin to print as a repeating pattern.

Intermediate Lesson Plan

Colour and Texture Collages

Dr. John Snow became well known for his modern and bold approach to colour, line and texture within his artwork. In this activity, participants will use multiple sheets of hand-painted patterns and textures in different colours to tear into smaller pieces and develop a collage-style *portrait* or *still life*. Variety and bold use of colour is the aim here–so assist participants with learning many different ways to create *texture* and *patterns*. See Preparation for a review of techniques that can be used in this exercise.

Materials

White printer paper, water-based or acrylic paints in primary colours and black and white, paintbrushes in a variety of sizes, an assortment of tools for texture techniques (cardboard, toothpicks, Q-tips, forks), sketching pencils, cardstock, scissors and glue sticks.

Preparation

Review the terms *colour-block*, *pattern*, *portrait*, *primary colour*, *still life* and *texture*. Next, provide a brief demonstration showing a few of the techniques (page opposite) that can be used to create textured patterns using paint and a few simple tools. Instruct participants to fill at least four sheets of printer paper, with one repeated pattern or texture on each page (preferably all in different colours). The coordinator of the activity can let participants know in advance that these sheets will be cut up to create collages in the second portion of the activity.

Textured Painting Techniques

Notched-cardboard lines

Short brushstrokes
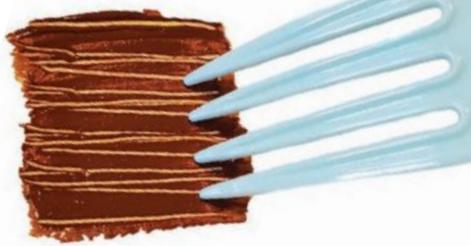
Scratch-patterns

Water-blending

Q-tip dots
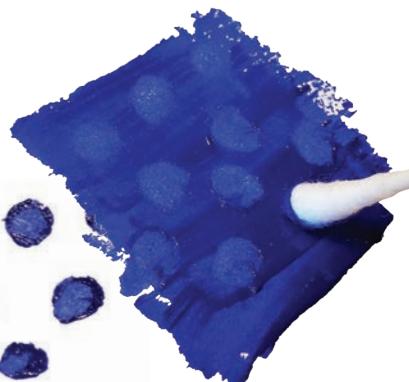
Instructions

Step 1   Once participants have developed a few sheets of patterns and textures by practicing some of the techniques reviewed in the Preparation portion of the activity, let these sheets of paper dry enough so that they can be handled without paint transferring to fingers or clothes.

Step 2   Have participants choose whether they would like to develop a portrait collage or a still life collage. Once they have decided, have them sketch out a loose drawing of their subject onto cardstock which they will fill in with their coloured patterns and textures.

Step 3   Using their drawing as a loose guide, participants can begin cutting shapes out of their patterned and textured paper in order to create their portrait or still life collage. Explain to participants that they do not have to follow their initial drawing *exactly* and that they can experiment with the positioning of their cut out shapes and colour placement. Hair can be bright blue or the sky can be yellow! The objective is to be playful and creative with the colours and textures available to them.

Step 4   When participants have planned out their collage compositions, they can apply the cut out shapes to a sheet of cardstock using a glue stick. Have them begin by applying shapes that are in the *background* and finish with shapes that are up close or in the *foreground*.

Step 5   Once they are finished, have them cut away any edges of painted paper that extend past the edge of the cardstock, so they are left with clean edges around their work.

Step 6   Have participants write a title for their collage on the back, and sign their name as the artists!

Discussion Questions

How did it make you feel cutting up the sheets of paper you painted patterns and textures on?

If you made a portrait, was it of someone you know? Or was the person imaginary?

If you made a still life, were you representing objects that you were looking at in the room you were in? Or were they from your imagination?

If you were to create the same patterns and textures again but could use more than just primary colours, what colours would you choose? Why?

Variation

Create puppets by cutting out shapes from the patterned and textured paper, and then glue them to popsicle sticks or tape them to wooden skewers. Have participants develop a short story with their puppet characters and present them.

Advanced Lesson Plan

Kitchen Lithography Postcards

Two artists and friends, Maxwell Bates and John Snow, were among the first artists to use the lithography printmaking process in Alberta.[11] Snow and Bates learned the technique by observing commercial lithographers, reading books and experimenting using trial and error.[12] Notice each of the artworks *In Good Company* features were made using the lithography technique. *But what is so unique about it? What can the lithography technique offer that other printmaking techniques do not?* Maxwell Bates commented in a 1961 issue of *Canadian Art* magazine: "Perhaps even greater subtlety and delicacy are possible than in any other print medium. This medium imposes no discipline and because of its flexibility, great breadth of expression is possible."[13] Both Bates and Snow appreciated the expressive and tactile nature of the lithography print medium. That being said, the form of traditional lithography that Bates and Snow used requires very specific and hard-to-come-by equipment. For this advanced lesson plan, participants will be able to learn the basic premise of the lithography technique by completing a simplified process of lithography sometimes termed "kitchen lithography."[14]

Materials

Sketchbooks; sketching pencils; two flat rectangular pieces of a milk carton (both cut to 3.5 x 5 inches); packing tape; aluminum foil; clean cotton cloths/rags; grease pencil; Coca-Cola (or Coke, but any cola should work); bowl or tray*; vegetable oil; oil-based etching ink or rubber-based ink (water-based will not work); brayer; inking plate (Plexiglas or another smooth flat surface); rag-paper to print on (art supply stores will be able to help you find the kind of paper you need for this); tray in which to dampen the paper; blotting paper; rolling pin; clean sponge; wooden spoon; parchment paper and oil paintbrush cleaner or degreasing dish soap (Dawn soap works well).

*Optional material

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[11] Bente Roed Cochran, "Part II: Printmaking in Alberta," "The Fifties: The Print Societies and the Hart House Show," in *Printmaking in Alberta 1945–1985* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989), 28.
[12] Ibid., "Part III: Alberta Print Artists," "John Snow," 137.
[13] Ibid., "Maxwell Bennett Bates," 57.
[14] "Kitchen Lithography," *Handprinted*, last modified October 24, 2019, https://handprinted.co.uk/blogs/blog/kitchen-lithography.

Preparation

Participants should prepare a one-colour postcard design by working in their sketchbooks. Have them consider who they would like to send their postcard to. They can create multiples with this process so they could make a list of two or three people if they wish.

Review the terms: *Lithography*, *printmaking paper*, *blotting paper* and *hand burnishing*.

Instructions

Step 1   Cut out two flat pieces of the milk carton (3.5 x 5 inches) and tape the edges together with packing tape to create a sturdy, non-bendable base for the printing plate.

Step 2   Pull out a piece of aluminum foil double the width of the printing plate base and lay it shiny side up on a clean piece of cotton cloth.

Step 3   Lay the milk-carton printing plate base in the middle of the foil. Fold the foil around the piece of carton, being careful not to rip it or touch the front side (participants should be working with the back of the plate facing toward them).

Step 4   Tape the foil to the carton printing plate using packing tape and be sure to tape over any openings and creases so that water will not collect under the foil layer.

Step 5   Carefully turn the plate over and use the clean cotton cloth to smooth out the front surface. Remember, do not touch the front surface with fingertips, otherwise natural skin oils will leave fingermarks on the final print.

Step 6   Start to fill in the desired design by making marks directly on the foil using a grease pencil. The greasy marks made will end up as the print, so keep in mind that there is no erasing in this process.

Step 7   Continuing to be careful not to touch the surface of the printing plate, take it to a sink and pour Coca-Cola soda over the front of the plate. Pour in a couple of directions and make sure that all of the printing plate has been covered. The acidity present in the soda creates a chemical reaction that makes the non-greasy parts of the printing plate moist so that it will repel oil-based ink. The greasy part of the plate will "grab onto" the ink and those parts will print. *Tip: complete this step over a bowl or tray, and the soda can be collected up and poured over another plate.*

Step 8   Rinse the plate with water and then bring it back to the work surface. Use vegetable oil on a clean cotton rag to wipe the plate until the drawing disappears.

Step 9   Roll out some ink onto an inking plate with a brayer, and ensure the roller is evenly coated with ink before applying it to the printing plate. It is important that the ink is oil-based or else the image will not print!

Step 10 Dampen a sheet of 4 x 6-inch printing (rag) paper in a tray filled with water, then take the paper out, place it in between two sheets of blotting paper and roll over the top of it with a rolling pin to absorb excess water.

Step 11 Returning to prepare the printing plate, wipe over the plate with a damp (not too wet) sponge to get the printing plate moist, then roll the ink over the surface. The oily ink will "grab onto" the greasy parts of the printing plate and will be repelled by the moist areas of the printing plate.

Step 12 Place the dampened paper directly on top of the prepared printing plate. Do not readjust once placed.

Step 13 Print the drawing by hand burnishing using a wooden spoon. Use a piece of parchment paper between the wooden spoon and the paper to prevent the wooden spoon from scraping the damp printing paper and damaging the paper fibres. This will also allow for smoother movement when pressing and sliding the spoon across the paper to print all the areas of the plate.

Step 14 Print from the plate again by wiping it clean with a damp sponge and re-inking.

Step 15 When finished, the ink can be cleaned off of the plate and any other surfaces with a degreasing dish detergent.

Step 16 Allow oil ink to dry fully (this often takes many days) and then have participants write a note on the back of one of their postcard prints to send to their chosen recipient.

Discussion Questions

Were you surprised at the complexity of the lithography process? Does it make you look at the artworks Dr. John Snow created any differently?

What did you find you liked about the process? What didn't you like?

After completing this activity once, is there anything you would try to do differently if you were to use this technique again?

What did you learn about how lithography works? Were you surprised by how much science and chemistry are involved with the process?

Variation

This printing process can be completed on a larger scale if desired by simply using a larger piece of Plexiglas as the printing plate base under the foil. If multiple colour layers are desired, a new printing plate must be created for each layer.

Vocabulary

Abstract – (see adjective, *fine arts*) : the formal aspect of art, emphasizing lines, colours, generalized or geometrical forms and so forth, especially with reference to their relationship to one another.

Colourblock – denoting or relating to an item characterized by contrasting blocks or panels of solid, typically bright colour.

Background – the part of a painting [or print] representing what lies behind objects in the foreground [see foreground].

Blotting paper – paper [that] is highly water absorbent because it has not been sized (treated chemically to prevent ink from smudging). [In printmaking] the paper needs to be moistened first, but if the paper contains too much moisture, it can be reduced with blotting paper.

Brayer – a printer's hand inking roller.

Collage – an artistic composition made of various materials (such as paper, cloth or wood) glued on a surface.

Composition – the artistic arrangement of the parts of a picture.

Foreground – the part of a scene or representation that is nearest to and in front of the spectator.

Hand burnishing – this is when the printmaker transfers the ink from the block to the paper by rubbing the reverse side of the paper with a baren or any other suitable tool, such as the back of a spoon.

Intaglio – in visual arts, one of the four major classes of printmaking techniques, distinguished from the other three methods (relief printing, stenciling and lithography) by the fact that the ink forming the design is printed only from recessed areas of the plate.

Lithography – [a process in which] ink is applied to a grease-treated image on the flat printing surface; nonimage (blank) areas, which hold moisture, repel the lithographic ink. This inked surface is then printed–either directly on paper, by means of a special press (as in most fine-art printmaking), or onto a rubber cylinder (as in commercial printing).

Multiple – refers to a series of identical artworks, usually a signed limited edition made specifically for selling.

Pattern – a repeated decorative design.

Plate – a prepared printing surface; can also be called a block or matrix.

Portrait – works of art that record the likenesses of humans or animals that are alive or have been alive. The word *portraiture* is used to describe this category of art.

Primary colour – any of a group of colours from which all other colours can be obtained by mixing. The primary colours for pigments are red, blue and yellow.

Print edition – see *edition* [def.] : the whole number of impressions or copies of a [print] printed at one time.

Print paper – of, relating to, *printmaking paper* : [special paper that has the] ability to withstand soaking and to absorb a lot of ink, often with multiple runs through a press, without disintegrating or deforming.

Printing press – see *press* [def.]: a printmaker uses a machine called a press to apply pressure to plates and paper, thereby transferring ink from the plates to the paper. Presses range in size from table-top versions to massive motorized presses. The bedplate of the press determines how large a work the printmaker can produce with the press.

Printmaking – the art or technique of making prints, especially as practiced in engraving, etching, drypoint, woodcut or serigraphy.

Relief printing (art printmaking) – a process consisting of cutting or etching a printing surface in such a way that all that remains of the original surface is the design to be printed. *For example, relief-printing processes like woodcut or linocut.*

Silkscreen (also called serigraphy) – a printmaking technique in which a mesh cloth is stretched over a heavy wooden frame and the design, painted on the screen by tusche or affixed by stencil, is printed by having a squeegee force colour through the pores of the material in areas not blocked out by a glue sizing.

Still life – a painting or drawing of an arrangement of objects, typically including fruit and flowers and objects contrasting with these in texture, such as bowls and glassware.

Style – a way of painting, writing, composing, building and so forth, characteristic of a particular period, place, person or movement.

Texture – the visual and especially tactile quality of a surface.

[Vocabulary definitions are simplified and/or paraphrased; spelling is Canadianized for print purposes.]

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Galleries and Museums with Artworks by John Snow

Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Edmonton, AB
Alberta's Government House Foundation
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON
Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa, ON
Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, ON
City of Calgary Art Collection, Calgary, AB
Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB
Glenbow Museum, Calgary, AB
MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, SK
Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery, Victoria, BC
Museum London, London, ON
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON
Nickle Arts Museum, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, ON
The Esplanade (Medicine Hat's Museum, Art Gallery, Theatre and Archives, Medicine Hat, AB)
University of Guelph, Guelph, ON
Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK
Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, AB
Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, MB

As well, his artworks are held at many private and corporate collections.

The Collector's Gallery: Fine Canadian Art in Calgary represents the Snow Estate.

Credits

TREX Southwest would like to credit the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for their ongoing support as well as the following individuals who contributed to the preparation of this travelling exhibition:

Artist – John Snow
Curator – Shannon Bingeman
Editor – Caralee Hubbell
Education – Ashley Slemming
Catalogue Design – Ashley Slemming
Crating – Doug Haslam

Special thanks to:

Gail Lint – Art Collection Consultant, AFA
Neil Lazaruk – Art Collections Preparator/Photographer, AFA

Contact strip 3 of 4, see Resources