

The Printed Page

Embellish a page from history by adding illustrations to a dictionary or vintage book page using an economical printmaking technique

(art + language)

Albrecht Dürer could be argued to be the most famous printmaker to date. He was born in 1471 in Nuremburg, and his first training as an artist was at his father's side learning the fine art of goldsmithing. It was obvious that Dürer exhibited artistic talent from a very young age. He did his first self-portrait at age 13 by using the silverpoint etching technique.

Due to the plague, Dürer left Nuremburg in 1494, but on his return, he began to delve into printmaking and painting as a career. He was immediately successful, receiving many commissions. Woodcuts and engravings became his most well-known work.

One of Dürer's most famous prints is titled The Rhinoceros. Dürer never actually saw the live animal, but rather based his elaborate woodcut on a written account of a famous sketch of the animal sent to him by a German printer. Dürer used the description to create a drawing he made of the rhinoceros. The rhinoceros arrived in Europe as an exotic specimen, and several other well-known artists created images of it. Sadly, the rhinoceros pictures of these artists remained unnoticed, while Dürer's woodcut became a visual icon. The comparison of Dürer's technical skills to those of the other artists made it clear that his skill was beyond compare.

Printmaking was a favorite technique of Durer's because of the detail he could attain, as well as the benefit that the plate could be altered as the printing process progressed. However, woodblocks require a certain amount of skill and strength to wrestle with. Using a rigid foam printing plate and simple tools makes printmaking easy. Why not illustrate an old dictionary or encyclopedia page with added visual imagery? Albrecht Durer would approve.

GRADES 5-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. View works such as "The Rhinoceros" and Dürer's self-portrait done in 1484 at the age of 13.
2. Collect a few pages from an old dictionary, encyclopedia, or other discarded vintage book.



Materials (required)

Hygloss Craft Trays, styrofoam, package of 25, 9" x 11" (61726-1010)

Utrecht Artists' Fluid Acrylics, 1 oz (01652-); share at least five colors across classroom

Invoart Soft Rubber Brayer, 4" (40121-1004); share five across class

Snippy Scissors, Sharp (57040-2005); share five across class

Crescent Decorative Matboard, Smooth Black, 32" x 40" (13007- 2656); share three sheets across class for 24 9" x 12" boards

Materials (optional)

X-Acto #2 Knife (57411-1002)

Blick Studio Newsprint Pads, 50 Sheets, 9" x 12" (10311-1043)

Amaco Wooden Modeling Tools, Set of 12 (30701-1012)



Preparation

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Process

1. After deciding on an interesting older book page to add a print to, begin to sketch imagery to accompany the page. For example, if using a dictionary page that describes the ocean, various shells or sea life could be printed onto the page.
2. Cut a foam tray into a printing block of the size that will be needed. Draw directly onto the plate with marker, or transfer a drawing using transfer paper.
3. Use a ballpoint pen or wooden tool to incise detail into the foam printing plate. Cut around the image to be printed so that it can be placed strategically onto the printed page.
4. Using fluid acrylics and a foam brayer, ink the printing plate lightly. Make a test print on newsprint paper to check the image. Clean the plate to add additional detail, or make any changes, and print again. When the print is working successfully, make prints onto the vintage book page. Tip: an extra foam tray makes a good surface for rolling out paint.
5. More than one foam printing plate could be used on each page, possibly using two or more colors.
6. Mount on a black mounting board for rigidity and to display.

Options

- Use markers to add additional detail or words.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.



Step 1: Choose a vintage dictionary or book page to add imagery to. Using a foam tray as a printing plate, incise lines using a ballpoint pen or other tool.



Step 2: Print onto a book page using fluid acrylics.



Step 3: Use multiple plates to apply more than one color. Mount to black matboard to display.

