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A Unique Intaglio Process: Color Reduction Etching

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Abstract: this paper is about a unique printmaking technique called color Intaglio: reduction process which is only developed and practices in the college of Fine Arts in Andhra University, Visakhapatnam. This particular process evolved from the scarcity of materials, students started reusing the zinc plates said by Shree T.Sudhakar Reddy Rtd. Professor from printmaking, Fine Arts Department at Andhra University, Visakhapatnam.

Index Terms/Key words: Printmaking, Intaglio, etching, color Intaglio, reduction process, zinc plate, burnishing, re use.

INTRODUCTION:

Printmaking is an art form that involves transferring images from a matrix, or template, onto another surface, usually paper or fabric. A printmaker creates the matrix out of wood, metal, glass or other materials, using tools or chemicals to work on the surface into an image. The artist then inks the template and transfers it onto another surface. Traditional printmaking methods, including woodcut, Intaglio/etching, engraving, lithography and stencil or serigraphy process, all these printmaking methods require a printing press to provide even pressure. The printmaking process lets artists create many iterations of the same image. Throughout history, it's served as an affordable way to communicate and share art. In this paper I focused on a Intaglio Printmaking technique.

Intaglio printmaking

Is a family of printing and printmaking techniques where the image is incised into a surface, and the incised line or sunken area holds the ink and then transfers to the paper. Common Intaglio methods include etching, aquatint, engraving, drypoint, viscosity and mezzotint.

Color Reduction Intaglio Process:

Often used in printmaking, involves creating a multi color layered print using a single zinc plate. The process begins with creating a tonal variation aquatint or carving a design into the plate and printing the first color. Then more of the plate carved away or the removal of the etched area, also called 'scraping', "burnishing", or mezzo tinting", and the next color is printed on top of the first layer. This process of burnishing and printing is repeated for each subsequent color, progressively removing more of the plate.

Surprisingly until now whatever the color intaglio prints you have seen are the multi plates, viscosity, local intaglio or hand painted techniques in color printing. This particular process evolved from the scarcity of materials, students started reusing the zinc plates and work on them said by Shree T.Sudhakar Reddy Rtd.

Professor from Fine Arts Department in Andhra University, Visakhapatnam. 35 years ever since of printmaking introduced as a specialization and especially for “Color reduction printing process” in department of Fine Arts, Andhra University, and Visakhapatnam.

Retired Professor T.Sudhakar Reddy completed his masters in printmaking specialization in 1982 from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda; he came to study in Baroda art school all the way from Andhrapradesh after watching a small clip of advertisement in newspaper in those days. After his studies in the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda he joined in Andhra University as a teacher in 1987. From 1990's he introduced 4 years Graphic Arts course in Bachelor of Fine Arts. In this duration this color printing evolved from the scarcity and lack of materials availability. Graphic Arts students always wanted to explore in color printing like painting students, as in printmaking mostly all prints are in black & white or monochrome.

No material availability zinc plates, limitation become invention of this color print. Every student used this technique in a different way and approach, mixed color effect, tones and quality of color created are the particularity of this process. Many times trail and error happened because of registration failures and students leftover due to lack of patience. In very starting stage some trails was on reprint like offset technique and monotype/monoprint way.

Mainly the problem in this color printing is to maintain the registration while approaching printmaking in traditional way, shrinkage and expansion of paper due to damping the paper several times during printing colors. To maintain the registration many students used to keep the zinc plate upside and print on down while printing second color and the other.

In aquatint fresh colors are possible, when we use old plates, because of re use; there is a kind of color effect we get as a result. Students wanted to produce number of works on zinc plates. Zinc was costly to purchase every time, so used to burnishing the plate and re use. No availability of materials becomes new evolution of technique. Many senior printmakers visited this college and surprised after watching this technique in live and never tried it in their practice because of its very meticulous process.

In viscosity technique of course, color printing is possible. But, only possible in abstraction composition and deep bitten plates. Where as in color reduction printing, different tonal variations in image, three dimensional kind of color transition are the specialty of this color reduction printing. Re work can be done in some stages by adding resin dust and doing tonal aquatint for getting fresh color in each stage of printing.

Interesting fact is when we use yellow or white they become gray as zinc plates oxidizes, but, in this Color printing we can manage to not oxidize with quick wiping and careful squeeze use to remove excess ink.

CONCLUSION:

Interestingly this process is not documented and you will not get to find in any internet sources. Printmaking is the medium of possibilities. All the printmaking mediums invented from the finding out cheap methods of mass production. This particular color reduction etching process also invented from scarcity of materials in the particular region and the background of student's conditions all reached to evolve a unique intaglio technique.

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