

LAIKA PRESS

Block Printing Manual, aka Relief, Woodcut, Linocut

136 Vesta St.

laikapress.org

SUPPLIES

wood or lino block	glass surface
carving tool	ink
paper/fabric	brayer
palette knife	newsprint

CARVING

RULE #1: Always carve away from yourself!

DRAW an image on the wood or linoleum block. (You can draw directly on it, or transfer a sketch to the surface using carbon paper.)

CARVE material away from the wood or linoleum block with a carving tool. (Remember, this is a negative process where you take away what you don't want to print! Also keep in mind that the printed image will be reflected horizontally from the appearance of the block, e.g. any text should be written onto the block backwards.)

PRINTING

PREP THE PRESS: Prepare the press by placing **blankets** on the press bed. (You'll do test prints later to adjust the press's height for your block.)

SCOOP THE INK: Scoop a moderate amount of **ink** onto a **glass surface**. Gradually pull ink into a line with the **brayer**. (There is such a thing as too much ink and too little. The ink should raise into small peaks, barely visible.)

INK THE BLOCK: Roll the **brayer** evenly over the block's surface, refilling the brayer with ink as needed. (There is a certain amount of ink that is ideal as well. It's a balancing act!)

STACK IT UP: Place a sheet of **newsprint** on the press bed to make sure it stays clean. Place your inked **block** face-up on the newsprint. Lay another sheet of **newsprint** on top of the inked surface. Carefully cover with **blankets**. (Tuck it into bed!)

TEST PRINT: Roll the block through the press, feeling the block pass under the roller. If it's difficult to get it through, the press is too tight. (Please be careful not to crank it down too much as it may damage your block or the press!)

PRINT: Once you've adjusted the press to the right amount of pressure, stack **newsprint -> block -> printmaking paper -> newsprint -> blankets**. (Smooth, dry paper like Stonehenge works best for block printing. Make sure to place the paper with finesse and don't move it afterward as you may smear the image!) Roll the block through. Carefully lift the blankets,

then the print. Admire! Place your print on the drying rack (water-based ink dries relatively quickly. Oil-based takes at least 24 hours).

MORE!

EXCESS INK: If there's too much ink on your block, you can print the uninked block on newsprint to help clear out excess ink that may have found its way into the grooves.

EDITIONING: Typically, prints are made in limited editions. This means there is a certain number of nearly identical prints made. (Some people scar the plate after printing the full edition so no more can be made!) Each print is signed either underneath the print or along the bottom of the page. Different regions of the world have different standards for the order, but in the US you write:

of edition, title, signature, year.

For example: 1/10, Happy Tree, Bob R., 1980

REGISTRATION: To help keep your edition uniform, you can use registration. This ensures that your block prints in the same position on each piece of paper you make prints with. To do this, tear your paper to a uniform size. Take a sheet of clear **acetate** or **mylar** and place the paper somewhere in the middle. With a drawing pen, mark the outsides of each corner. Remove the paper, then place your block where you'd like it to print on the paper. With a drawing pen, mark the outsides of each corner. Place mylar on the press bed over the bottom sheet of newsprint. Use these corner marks as guides while making your prints.

INK MODIFIERS: **Burnt plate oil** lowers ink's viscosity, making it more fluid. (A few drops should do!) **Magnesium Carbonate** can be added to thicken ink and make it more stiff.