

The Evolution of Picasso's linoleum cut in Art education Students' Printmaking Project

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Abstract: Materials play an active role in the artistic process, being one of the artwork's means and methods, and are deemed a medium that carries the artist's thought and sense. Medium's nature and technique affect a unique aesthetic aspect that distinguishes that material from other materials or media. Linoleum is one of the crucial mediums throughout the history of printmaking, which was introduced during the twentieth century as an alternative to some types of relief printing, especially the wood-blocks; while Linoleum technique is one of the critical academic methods adopted in art education and has been working significantly as hand block printing in the field of art education over the years now. One of the most famous artists who used linoleum cut printing is Pablo Picasso, who created more than a hundred art prints. He initiated his images with the work so-called "Portrait of a Young Woman, After Cranach the Younger," using a particular mode of printing using one linoleum block for each color separately, before he developed that technique by using a single multi-stage linoleum block to create multi-color prints. In this study, the researcher touches on an important matter related to the printing technique that Pablo Picasso did not try, which is the production of one of his oil paintings in linoleum cut, with two methods: the first is related to the multi-color print by layers of the one linoleum block, while the other method is to implement the work entirely in using Pastel colors and then print a single layer to show the lines and details of the original image in the edition that was produced. The experiment in this study was conducted through the printing project by art education students in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait.

Keywords: Picasso, Printmaking, Art Education, relief printing, linoleum cut

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I. Introduction

As is known, printing and painting have continuously developed in a reciprocal relationship overall eras. That interrelationship between printing and painting was especially noticeable in the first half of the nineteenth century, a century in which the impressionist artists' works were particularly famous. Somehow, it has changed the shape of art history. Several color printing techniques were used during that time, which affected technological development and accelerated its progress in terms of image creation. The second half of the nineteenth century showed remarkable changes as well, where advances in technology and industry have led to enhancing printing technology, which, in turn, has influenced contemporary publications to this day. [1] The twentieth century was a time that witnessed many new artistic trends and dramatic changes in art history. For example, the art of modernism, symbolism, expressionism, and Dada appeared during that period, followed by surrealism, experimental art, and contemporary art, especially the philosophy of the Dadaism and abstract artists who changed the art thought in the entire world. They are also the owners of the idea that it is from breathing that an art product can be created to express the person's core since everything produced is considered an art material. [1] Pablo Picasso is a Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker, ceramist, stage designer, poet, and playwright, who spent most of his life in France. He is arguably one of the most famous and influential artists of the 20th century. Picasso is less well known in printmaking, although it was one of his several talents. He created lithographs, engravings, drypoints, linocuts, and woodblock symbols. Always searching for something new, he experimented with these techniques very often. Some of Picasso's graphic works are a mixture of several methods. [2] In 1905, Picasso created his first prints, a series of 15 drypoints and an engraving, then more graphic works were produced in the early 1930s. However, most of Picasso's prints were created following World War II. He has often worked with Atelier Mourlot, a famous art publisher and print shop in Paris. Pablo

Picasso created about 200 lithographs from 1945 to 1949 with Henri Deschamps, a professional lithographer from Atelier Mourlot. Today, art lovers all over the world search for Picasso prints. [3]

1. Purpose of the research:

1.1 Educating art students in art education about the importance of the works produced by the great artists and the extent of the depth of those works, and their impact on the course of art history.

1.2 Finding creative solutions to deal with the process of recreating famous paintings of it transferred from a painting form to a print, enriching the creative field of printmaking with art values and formulations related to the linoleum printing method.

1.3 Adaptation of the printmaking techniques to the different educational stages in art.

2. Research question:

Is it possible to achieve high art values if Picasso's paintings are implemented in relief printing, whether by layering or direct coloring?

3. Research method:

Analytical descriptive approach as practice-based research applied by undergraduate art education students (experimental process) at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait.

4. Research limitations:

4.1 The research is limited to using Pablo Picasso's works as a subject for experiment and using one of his paintings as samples for experimentation.

4.2 One type of relief printing shall be used by linoleum.

4.3 The experiment shall be applied to art education students at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait.

5. Theoretical phase: Students' understanding and comprehending

5.1 Explanation of what Picasso presented to art in various fields.

5.2 The researcher shows what distinguishes the field of printing from Picasso.

5.3 Clarify the importance of relief printing and how much it may benefit from this experience, whether by building layers of color or coloring immediately before the printing process.

6. Practical phase: Drawing - Carving - Painting - Printing:

6.1 Each student selects one Picasso work with specifications that help be implemented as a print (broad lines - clarity of features - strength of color - diversity of flat areas).

6.2 The students drew the image in pencil to be ready and clear to transfer it to the linoleum surface.

6.3 Dividing the students into (A) and (B) groups, where group (A) is to carry out the experiment using a layering system and group (B) is to carry it out through direct coloring and then printing the final lines.

6.4 Group (A) begins by dividing the areas of the layers to be printed while defining the scope of printing on a single sheet.

6.5 Group (B) begins by coloring the areas in pastel colors and then printing the final lines on the area of one sheet.

II. Picasso... Artist of the Society

The life of that Spanish artist, residing in France from 1901 until he died in 1973, was punctuated by armed conflicts. However, ironically, he never took part in any war himself and was never a soldier. Picasso was exempted from compulsory military service and fought the wars that devastated the 20th century as a civilian. He was an inspiring figure and was honored after liberation as a resistance artist and activist, where his political declarations have given him a unique role in history. Picasso has always claimed that his artworks are his "memoirs." With the development of the twentieth century, with two world wars and increasing totalitarianism, Picasso's works have always been marked by warlike motifs dating back to his childhood. In 1912, the artist included newspaper collages about the Balkan conflict in some of his paintings.

No sooner had Picasso settled in Paris in 1904 than the struggle for controlling the world's leading art city began. It was also the year of the young Spaniard's first intense encounter with the printing industry. He continued to paint, but he also experimented with his classical etching technique, working with topics he also addressed in his paintings. The scenes of poverty and the circus world reflect the artist's reality as an outsider in French society. As he begins thinking of the image, his art compositions convey his ability to portray strong moods by using simple means. He initially produced only a small number of painting prints that he had executed. It wasn't until 1913, a time that he made a name for himself in the art market, that art dealer Ambroise Vollard committed to publishing these prints. To this end, he had fourteen steeld plates (a chemical hardening process permitting a more significant number of high-quality images). He produced his engraving series *Les Saltimbanques* in 250 issues.[4]

III. Picasso and Relief Printing

In 1954, Picasso accidentally met Hidalgo Arnera, a print artist from the French city of Vallauris, specializing in linoleum cuts. Their first collaboration was the production of advertising posters for bullfighting. Meanwhile, more than seventy years old thence, Picasso immersed himself in that technique more than ever. Linoleum cut allowed Picasso to create pictorial decorations with large areas of bright color, where he developed several new methods in this framework. He was particularly interested in the principle of 'reduction,' i.e., the artist is only working on a single printing plate, printing temporary states on the same sheet, one on top of the other, in different colors. It is the same manner that the researcher will follow in this study with Group A students. Picasso's prints are the product of the highest degree of precision and focus, as the artist needs to plan each step in the process, which is precisely what Group A shall do. In 1962, Felix Brunner wrote in his Handbook of Graphic Reproductions: "Only a short time ago, the author would have found it difficult to reproduce a convincing example of a linocut. But now Pablo Picasso has produced a sequence of beautiful multi-color linocuts, an entire series of beautiful, multi-color linocuts [...], which will occupy an important place in the history of graphic art." [5]

IV. Color Theory in Picasso's Work

Picasso was greatly influenced by what was happening around him for his paintings. This can be seen in the Blue Period, the Rose Period, the African period, the Cubist period, and post-World War II. The researcher presents an example of Picasso's relationship with colors in this study. Few colors were as closely associated with his passion, such as blue. Picasso was famous for adopting certain pigments during periods of his career. He used to say: "Colors, like features, follow the changes of the emotions." Blue was the first color to completely dominate a range of his work, as Picasso adopted it during the first few years of the 20th century when he was a young artist struggling and feeling sheer grief.

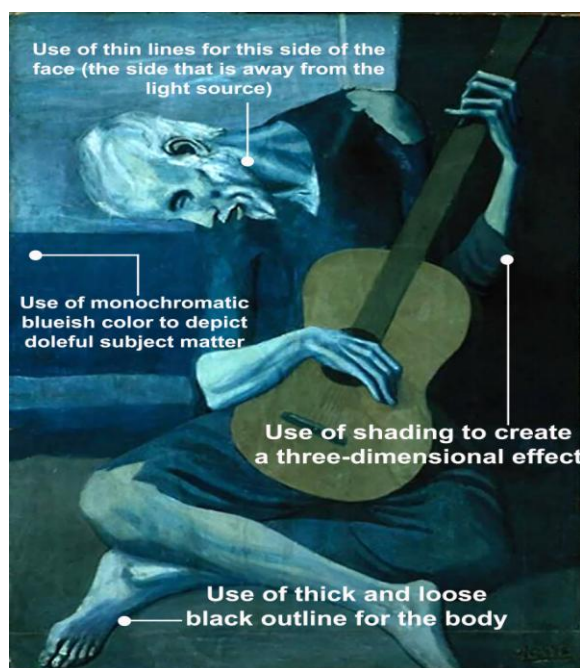


Fig. 01 researcher example of Picasso's color theory in the Blue Period

Stella Paul wrote about Picasso's color in her Chromophilia, "Picasso painted blue from 1901 to 1904, depicting poor figures in various states of extreme surrender and despair. Musicians, imprisoned beggars, and deprived individuals were immersed in phosphorescent cold blue. As she also says, "The Old Guitarist is the material expression of something sad, disenfranchised and marginalized" and "A twilight mood of low spirits is cast over the subject's strange blue-tinted flesh, his garments and garments the ambient encompassing space. The angular gestures and attenuated limbs and features of this downcast, blind musician reinforced impressions established by the insistent blue color." [6]

The researcher explains the characteristics and features of the painting that Stella Paul spoke about, as in the previous "Fig.01". In other periods of the long life of astonishing creativity, Picasso stripped the intensity of color to create paintings of muted, earthy tones and periodically reduced his drawings to a simple range of grays ranging from black to white. Of course, there were also periods of full color during print.

V. Picasso and Linoleum Revolution

Portrait of a Young Woman, After Cranach, the Younger, from 1958, is Picasso's first and most crucial linoleum cut print, "Fig.02". He and the young printer, Hidalgo Arnéra, created this detailed portrait of a 16th-century girl four centuries after the painting by German Renaissance painter Lucas Cranach the Younger. Picasso found the painting's flat, abstract two-dimensionality, the striking ornamental detail of the sitter's clothing, and the eminently expressive shape in the shadow and curtain patterns the perfect source to transform an image by one of his artistic heroes. [7] The layering of these five elaborately cut blocks combines to create his most painterly prints, transforming the old master's portrait into a modern mastery of rhythm and meaning. After finishing this print, Picasso found the traditional, multi-block process too labor-intensive and complicated, so he invented a "reduction" printing method using just one piece of linoleum per print for future linocut editions, making this work all the more iconic. As explained in *Cubism and its Legacy: The Gift of Gustav and Elly Kahnweiler*:

"Although he had already made one linocut in 1939 ('Pour la Tchecoslovaquie. Hommage à un pays martyr'), Picasso only started exploring this technique in earnest in 1953-4, with...Hidalgo Arnéra in Vallauris. He began to experiment with making linocuts in different colors on separate blocks, which he would then superimpose on the same sheet of paper. He first attempted 'Portrait of a Woman after Cranach the Younger' in two colors on 3 July 1958 but returned to the same subject the following day more ambitiously. On 4 July, he made five different linoleum blocks – sepia, yellow, red, blue, and black – to be superimposed on each other in that order. He then proceeded to print different proofs, making two different states of the color blocks and three of the black to arrive at the final image." [8]



Fig. 02 Picasso's individual linoleum block designs with associated layer/color

Portrait de jeune fille has been written about extensively and exhibited in institutions and galleries worldwide. This print is included in many surveys on Picasso and portraiture chiefly because Picasso could synthesize critical elements so successfully: image, history, theory, complexity, scale and distinguish them with his unique dose of independent vitality. [7] Picasso's dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler has explained the genesis of this work:

"One of Picasso's notable characteristics was his need to transform existing works of art, to compose 'variations on a theme,' as it were. His point of departure was often simply a reproduction in a book; or even a postcard sent by myself, such as 'Cranach the Younger's Portrait of a Woman' [1564] in Vienna [collection Kunsthistorisches Museum], which became his first linocut in color. Among other things what struck him in particular about this painting was the way the woman's shadow 'rhymes' with the upper part of her body....This need to transform was certainly an important characteristic of Picasso's genius." [9]

Picasso was a passionate student and proponent of European painting, wanting to reinvigorate these traditions more than any 20th-century artist. His love of replaying the roles of earlier artists reached its height in the 1950s when he devoted himself to painting, drawing, sculpture, and printmaking to reworking masterpieces. [7]

"Cranach the Elder was second only to Rembrandt of the Northern masters who inspired Picasso. The rich territory that he was to mine intensively in his 'old master period' follows Cranach with El Greco and Courbet

in 1950 and continues with Cranach the Younger and Van Gogh as well as Goya, Poussin, David, and Degas....Picasso is taking on the artists who, for him were still alive and who he said he felt were 'all standing behind me watching me at work.' At once reverential and competitive, Picasso's relationships with his 'collaborators' became a means of appropriating and fusing the disparate elements of their great themes in order to rewrite them in his visual language. These homages affirm Picasso's roots in the classical tradition in which imitation and originality are recognized as reciprocal parts of each other and situate him firmly within the lineage of great artists." [10]

"Portrait of a Young Woman, After Cranach the Younger" is the tour de force of Picasso's print oeuvre. The print's inventiveness, both in form and medium, indicates Picasso's pursuit and ability to uncover something new. While it is a nod to one of his artistic idols, the image he created is imbued with timelessness and an undeniable freshness. [7]

VI. Practical aspect: steps and analysis of results

When the researcher started the practical experiment with the students, the latter had sufficient information about color at Picasso and the different phases of Picasso as general theoretical information. However, because the researcher believes that the practical aspect should be preceded by knowledge of the relevant field or subject, he explained to Group (A) that they would adopt actions and steps similar to those Picasso had adopted when he produced his work "Portrait of a Young Woman, After Cranach the Younger" in 1958. The procedures are as indicated in "Fig.02". As for group (B), their methods will be different, which is the difference that the researcher will reach in this experiment; i.e., after the process of drawing lines on the paper, the student begins to color the spaces with pastel colors and then the last layer of the linoleum block that defines the main features and lines of the work is to be printed.

VI.01 Steps in Group (A): They are the traditional steps that Picasso implemented in the first linoleum work, depicted in the above "Fig.02", which are five layers of colors. It is deemed limited and requires concentration and time from the student to complete it. Some students suggested adding more colors, and the researcher explained that adding a color shall render the process more difficult and consume a long time. Then the researcher allowed some students in Group (A) to raise the number of colors to seven, that is, seven layers, and they needed more time because each layer required time for the paint to dry so that the student could print the next layer. These colors are (yellow, orange, green, light blue, navy, red and black), where colors are printed from lighter to darker on a white paper sheet. "Fig.03" depicts the best results.

VI.02 Steps in Group (B): They are the core of this experiment and are based on direct drawing and coloring through pastel colors; thus, spray the colored surface with fixative spray, followed by a single layer for black color only through the main linoleum block, representing only the embossed painting lines, while the other spaces will be engraved, as in "Fig.04". This step is also the last in Group (A), where black color is printed as lines. With direct coloring, the researcher means that the student colors the spaces and merges the colors without restrictions, unlike Group A, which is restricted in building the seven layers. The researcher believes that colors should be complementary, and printing takes less time than the traditional steps adopted by Group (A). The results were more vivid; even the students noticed the difference in the results reached by Group (B), as in "Fig.05."

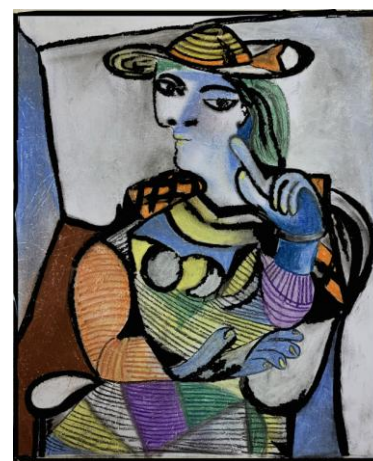


Fig. 03 one of the Group (A) results.

Fig. 04 the main Linoleum block.

Fig. 05 one of the Group (B) results

After applying this experiment, the researcher found that printing by direct coloring results in better diversity and it is less complicated than printing linoleum in the traditional form, as the restrictions of colors and the number of layers do not give the student the freedom to diversify colors and the freedom to combine colors in one space. There is a beautiful multiplicity and diversity in the results, even if the source of the image is one for all students, as indicated in "Fig.06", where the incorporation of colors through pastel colors made the work more modern. The result is Picasso's painting "Portrait of Marie Therese Walter 1937" for all 15 students who applied the experiment.



Fig. 06 more results of Group (B) prints that show the diversity of colors

VII. Conclusion

At the end of this research and practical experience, the researcher believes that teachers in the field of art education should urge and encourage students to consider and study the work of those great artists; such as Pablo Picasso, who is one of the most critical and best comprehensive artists, who went through many experiences in various art fields and diversity in the use of raw and consumed materials. Picasso has reformulated the general form of creative work and raised the ceiling of creativity and innovation in art. Educational curricula in art education should support the experimental aspect in the materials related to art and crafts in general and encourage students to do art experiments in various raw materials to reach diversity in production based on innovation and away from the traditional aspects of art. We should keep pace with the intellectual development that is constantly changing.

VIII. Recommendations

The researcher believes that there is a lot in Picasso's art history. It is possible to undertake research and several experiments and innovations that are not limited to the field of printing only. Still, it is also possible to address the aspects of sculpture and ceramics at Picasso because the experiences of this artist are very fruitful in those areas. The researcher was struck by the amount of innovation in the African Period and how human identity is presented in a sculpture with more than one angle linking the scenes of the work with many ideas with human content. That may enhance the students' artistic and human values altogether. Pablo Picasso is a great artist who gave a lot to art, and educational curricula in art education should take advantage of his work of art.

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