



## Print Making Terminology

Many of the items in LeonARTo.com are the product of the highest quality print making techniques. The following is a simple glossary of some of the descriptive terms used on LeonARTo.com to describe the items that you will see.

### **Photo-Mechanical 4 Color Lithography**

### **Original Lithography**

### **Serigraphy (Silk Screening)**

### **Etchings (English), Intaglio (Italian), Gravure (French)**

### **Mezzotint**

### **Giclees and Custom Giclees**

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### **Photo-Mechanical 4 Color Lithography**

The purpose of this common printmaking technique is to recreate in detail an original work of art. Utilizing photography and the separation of the film into the four basic colors (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black-CMYK), printing plates are made for each color, which allows the usually computerized press to apply the right amount of color to the appropriate portion of the image. Wide varieties of quality papers can be utilized for this process, although, in the world of art, is usually synonymous with somewhat lower value fine art prints. However, this is only a technique and the end result can be indicative of the finest printmaking results.

### **Original Lithography**

Regardless of whether an original painting exists, the purpose of an original lithograph is to create a work that is "original" to the printing plates. There is no reproduction process. The artist works with a "chromist", who following the artist's dictates, creates either single color or multi color printing plates, the most popular being stone, but other materials, such as acetate, can, and are, utilized. The end result

is designated as “the original work” While generally considered a step above the process described above, the end result must be judged, because paper characteristics and plate making skills come into play in making the comparison. Some works are better done in certain medias than others.

## **Serigraphy (Silk Screening)**

Serigraphy is a technique of pressing colored inks through a flat, thin, precut sheet of silk. Serigraphs sometimes may have up to 100 different screens to apply color to the image on paper. A black and white photo-enlargement is made of the original work to the size of the serigraph. A sheet of clear plastic, called mylar, is placed on top of the photo enlargement. Beginning with the first color on a list of colors, the artist paints the mylar sheet with an opaque ink covering all areas where that color appears. This is called a hand painted color separation, which is prepared for every color. Each separation is exposed directly over photographic film in front of an arc lamp. The film is then placed in water. The painted areas of the mylar sheet block out the light and a negative image is left on the film when washed with water. A piece of silk is stretched tightly across a wooden frame, which is called a screen. When the film is dry it is attached to the screen and becomes a stencil. A sheet of paper is placed beneath the screen and colored inks are forced through the mesh by using a squeegee. For each screen a separate screen is required. After the screening is done a coat of varnish is put on the piece to protect the colors and give the print a glossy finish.

## **Etchings (English), Intaglio (Italian), Gravure (French)**

One of the oldest forms of printing technique, which requires a single or multiple plates that have been etched with the design of the image using etching tools and sometimes acid. The result created, not only outlines the image in a single color (monotone), but allows, based on the gradual depth of the etches to create a variety of shades from one color (monochrome). The depth of the etch corresponds with the relationship of black to white to gray (Greg scale) and can represent several thousands of gradations. Etching plates are typically copper, although other materials may be used. It is also possible to screen a portion of the image to create a ‘chine de colle’ affect. The printing plates are typically used on a hand, rather than a mechanized modern press.

## Mezzotint

Mezzotint is a technique variant of etching a plate. It is a more direct method of achieving tone. The metal used is copper, which has the best quality for working with this technique, as it is softer than other possible metals. Pitting of the plate is achieved by working with a toothed tool, called Rocker, every way across the plate. The best tones will be achieved when a single tooth of the rocker meets one point of the plate 25-25 times. To roughen the copper properly and pit it evenly with tiny holes takes weeks, but when printed, this background gives a velvety tone, regardless of the color used, which is unattainable by any other technique. The shadows and light are then reclaimed by burnishing back towards relative or total smoothness. Many other more sophisticated techniques with assorted tools may be performed on the plate to give it texture and tone. After the plate is finished and inked in 2-8 colors which are wiped by hand carefully on the plate, it is printed on damp paper on the hand etching.

## Giclees and Custom Giclees

Giclees are now the industry standard method for transferring images, typically from film of an original image to either canvas and paper. Once the image is digitized, the printing is done by a large giclee production printer (IRIS), which applies the ink to the medium by an intricate computerized technique.

The reason that giclees are utilized is that the entire edition need not be produced at once, like for a serigraph or lithograph. A designation as a custom giclee within LeonARTo means that the entire will be produced to order and will generally require a two to three week advanced order before delivery.

Giclees now typically have a life close to 100 years due to advanced development techniques. They are all very high quality when compared to other techniques described herein.