

Printmaking Creation: An Exploration of the Interaction Between Material Selection and Emotional Resonance

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Abstract:In contemporary art, printmaking has evolved beyond a mere creative medium to become a unified form of expression that integrates image creation and printing techniques. This paper aims to explore in depth the interactive mechanisms between the diverse expressive capabilities of printmaking materials and the emotional expression of printmakers. It focuses on analyzing how the characteristics of different materials influence the creative process and the emotional expression of the final artwork. Through an examination of the physical properties of printmaking materials and their relationship to the artist's emotions, this study reveals the significance and role of materials in printmaking. Additionally, this paper investigates the decision-making process of artists in material selection and its impact on emotional expression, as well as how the selection of materials interacts with visual perception and emotions. This research not only provides a theoretical foundation for printmaking art but also offers practical guidance and reference for printmakers in their creative endeavors.

Keywords: Printmaking, Material Medium, Emotional Expression, Mixed-Media Printmaking

1. Introduction

1.1 Preface

Kong Guoqiao, in his *Reflections on the Characteristics and Production of Printmaking*, argues that one of the crucial factors distinguishing printmaking from other art forms is its dependence on and sensitivity to materials.¹ The diverse properties of materials allow for both deliberate selection and serendipitous combinations, resulting in indirect yet faithful effects. Simultaneously, the printmaker's mastery of techniques and grasp of the creative theme play vital roles. Engaging in these bold yet meticulous processes leads the creator through a series of covert introspective journeys. Printmaking is thus favored as a form of self-expression that resonates emotionally. The physical act of printmaking also have been understood as an embodied gesture and visible scar of memory (Caine & Lavoie, 2011, 2015). As printing materials are transformed into printed images, experiences can be transmuted into tangible, tactile memory traces to be felt through the artwork (Barthes, 1980). In this process, continuous reflection on the printmaking language presented by physical materials helps us examine our creative intentions from multiple perspectives, consistently constructing our spiritual world through both rational and emotional lenses.

1.2 Research Background

This paper aims to thoroughly examine the relationship between the use of material textures and emotional expression in printmaking. With rapid advancements in science and technology and evolving social philosophies and ideologies, innovations in printmaking concepts, forms, and techniques have multiplied. Contemporary printmakers are gradually breaking free from the constraints of traditional materials, extensively employing novel or interdisciplinary media such as plastics, metals, fabrics, and industrial waste. In pursuit of exploring the expressive power and interactivity of materials in space, they are transcending 2D by merging printmaking with installation art and even using new media technologies like 3D printing to endow new avenues and possibilities for printmaking materials. Qi Fengge, in *On the Contemporaneity of Printmaking*, emphasizes that the innovation of visual imprints and schematic structures is indicative of the contemporary language of printmaking, but it equally requires unique creativity.² Regarding material selection and expression, printmakers should not only skillfully use textural language that matches their expressive intent and reflects deep contemplation of practical issues, but also adhere to the principles of creativity distinct from imitation and progressiveness relative to tradition. He also notes that creation through technical means achieves a perfect manifestation of specific intentions and concepts. The ideological nature of art determines that it is fundamentally spiritual and conceptual. Thus, in printmaking, the subjective transformation of materials, the conveyed formal language through visual perceptions, reaches the locus of emotion, which in turn inspires the renewal of creative concepts.

1.3 Research Content and Methodology

This paper conducts textual analyses on the formal language and creation of printmaking by reviewing relevant literature. It includes a case study on the intentions behind Anselm Kiefer's use of mixed-media and gathers the works and interpretations of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts students to explore the patterns and characteristics between emotional expression and material usage in printmaking. While discussing theory, this exploration is supported by practical experience and empirical observations.

2. Theoretical Understanding of Printmaking Materials and Creator's Emotional Expression

2.1 Types of Printmaking Media Materials

Printmaking, compared to other forms of painting, exhibits a significant disparity between its visual effects and photorealistic scenes, which underlines its experimental, innovative, and exploratory nature throughout the artistic process. This allows for more uninhibited visual expression and creation, particularly evident in the selection and use of printmaking materials. In terms of printing media, a wide array of materials is available: For woodcut prints, options include pear wood, basswood, PVC expansion sheet, or linocut; etching can be performed on many materials such as copper, zinc, steel, and acrylic plates; lithographs can be drawn on stone and metal plates; silk-screen printing involves pushing ink through mesh onto the substrate; and mixed-media prints can incorporate even more diverse media, including cardboard, fabric boards, glass plates, and virtually any material the creator can conceive. Based on printing principles, techniques are categorized into planographic, intaglio, relief, and stencil, each of which can be combined flexibly for varied printing results. The tools for printmaking are equally varied and complex, including single-edge knives, triangular scrapers, gouges, drypoint needles, lawn cloth, Baren, brayers, and more. The methods of plate-making are virtually limitless, encompassing techniques such as intaglio and relief, etching, scooping, and scraping; drypoint, dusting, etching, mezzotint, oil lifting, and processes involving photo-sensitivity, scraping, and de-gumming. Print media also include sugar-lift, carbon black, pharmaceutical ink, soft waxes, asphalt, shellac, peach resin, rosin, talcum powder, and various chemical agents. From a single chemical agent or engraving tool to a combination of printing methods and multiple techniques, the spirit of innovation and experimentation in printmaking is manifested in every aspect.

2.2 Creator's Selection of Materials and Emotional Resonance

Goethe once said, "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister"; mastery emerges from constrained work. This limitation, the true condition of any art, is style." Benefiting from the indirectness and diversity of the multiple conversion processes through which physical materials mediate printmaking language, creators vary greatly in their criteria for selecting materials, resulting in works that are distinctively characterized. Fundamentally, however, a creator's subjective emotions, their grasp of the subject and object of creation, and their aesthetic inclinations are among the key factors that determine how printmaking materials are chosen and expressed. Creators choose materials based on an emotional sentiment they wish to convey or a deepening intent regarding the creative theme. Such material inevitably resonates with the creator—in a sense, it's a mutual selection. Through the processing and printing of ready-made materials, they resonate emotionally with the creator, gaining a second life on the print surface. This indirect form of expression allows printmakers' creative intentions and emotions to be uniquely and subtly organized and interpreted during this process. The visual language displayed by the printed textures also stimulates the creator's sensory experience to some extent. By extracting and absorbing the unique visual language presented by the materials, creators exercise their associative and interpretive abilities while developing their own aesthetics. It is a continuous cycle. The tactile standards during plate preparation, the adhesion and experimentation of materials on the plate surface, the proportioning of ink viscosity, and the adjustment of machine pressure, the process of creating and printing often stimulate and hone a kind of neurotic acuity in creators. In choosing materials, creators often unwittingly engage in this deep investigative function of printmaking, searching for materials that resonate with certain qualities to continually link, reconfigure, dismantle, and then integrate with individual emotions.

Moreover, the creator's physical manipulation of materials grants them a reconstructive capacity, allowing specific emotional interpretations to permeate the object materials. To viewers, everyday materials defined by conventional standards undergo unpredictable transformations, followed by a raw modification under the press and pigments. Materials embossed with rich personal experiences and emotions act as a kind of imprint of the creator's concepts, compelling viewers to break the ice with the artwork in front of them, contemplating and deducing the dynamic circumstances of the materials during the creation process, a form of silent social interaction. Rudolf Arnheim, in *Visual Thinking*, classifies artistic activity as a form of rational activity. Here, perception and thought are intricately intertwined, forming a cohesive whole; in any domain of cognition, genuine creative thinking is conducted through "imagery." In visual and auditory senses, shapes, colors, motions, sounds, and more, can be easily joined into various explicit and highly complex spatial and temporal structures, making these senses excellent (or ideal) media and venues for rational activities to exercise and develop.³ Materials act as catalysts that intensify and enrich the intentions that the creator wish to express, while the sensory receptors that receive visual language are sensors, guiding observers to quickly grasp the creator's motives and specific emotions in this transcendent social process across time and dimensions. Sometimes, the emotions and interpretations of the viewer also contribute, forming a secondary creation. Overall, the interplay between creator and material is concretized throughout the entire process of platemaking and printing.

3 The Impact of Material Selection on Emotional ExpressionThe Exploration of Mixed-Material in the Printmaking of Anselm Kiefer

Dewey (1934) states, in art, "meanings are actually embodied in a material which, thereby becomes the medium for their expression". He further states that the materials forming aesthetic experience directly express the meaning evoked by imagination.⁴ Whether the materials are naturally formed and deposited or crafted by science, technology, and human invention, their inherent characteristics and connotations are incredibly rich. Anselm Kiefer places particular importance on the "spiritual connections" among the materials he uses in his mixed-media printmaking, drawing out the pre-existing spirit within them. He advocates for the expression on a spiritual level and aims to discard superfluous, meaningless descriptions, promoting the preservation of both the spirituality and materiality of the materials in artistic creation, lending a more dimensional variation to the printmaking imagery.



Figure 1. *For Robert Fludd* (Left); *I Hold All Indias In My Hand* (Right)

Kiefer has his own special standards for spiritual culture: Kabbalah texts, Greek mythology and drama, and modern astronomy are among his favorites, which he incorporates into his works either as titles or themes to illustrate the coherence of underlying thoughts. He doesn't adopt them wholesale but chooses elements that assist his explanations. His works, such as *To Robert Fludd*, *I Hold All Indias In My Hand*, and *The Starry Heavens Above Me*, and *the Moral Law Within Me*, frequently feature the image of Robert Fludd (often used as a self-portrait by Kiefer), which recurs with the multiplicity characteristic of woodcut prints, sometimes inverted or in a yoga pose. Kiefer resonates with the mystic's ideologies and thought patterns: they both utilize the



Figure 2. *Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles*



Figure 3. *Ways of Worldly Wisdom: Hermann's Battle*



Figure 4. *The red sea*

potential similarities between different systems of thought, emphasizing the relationships among these systems. Kiefer projects micro and macro thoughts onto the similarities and connections between the universe and the human body. Sunflower seeds, though tiny carriers, contain the potential for growth and reproduction. His use of this material in printmaking, besides radiating macro and micro cosmic ideas, also intentionally points to alchemical origins and material transformation. Kiefer projects micro and macro thoughts onto the cosmos and human anatomy, showing how sunflower seeds, though tiny carriers, contain the potential for growth and reproduction. His use of this material in printmaking, besides radiating macro and micro cosmic ideas, also points to the origins of alchemy and material transformation. Kiefer's emphasis on the metaphorical use of materials aligns closely with the aforementioned connotations and is evident in his rigorous material handling: in the cellar of his Barjac studio, he stores materials for past and future works (custom items, dried plants, and many other objects). The numbers on the shelves reference modern astronomical categorizations of stars based on distance, color, and mass. Since 1996, Kiefer has been using these numbers in his works as a satirical reference to humanity's desire to grasp the infinite universe and scale it down to human dimensions, represented by countless sunflower seeds scattered on his canvases (as seen in *Your Age and Mine and the Age of the World*, *The Renowned Orders of the Night*).⁵ For instance, in *Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles*, he references a scene from Corneille's play *Le Cid*, depicting the eve of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar's campaign against the Moors. Plowed lands stretch to the horizon, with dark sunflower seeds scattered across the sky to represent stars. The series describes a vast, lonely landscape consistent with his repeated portrayals of unsettling ruins, and his works often depict images of burned land. This piece combines woodcut prints with acrylic, latex, shellac, and sunflower seeds. Sunflowers are a recurring motif in many of his works, generally seen as drawn from textual sources: *For Robert Fludd* and *The Secret Life of Plants* reflect this. Daniel Arasse considers this the celebration of a mode of thought which



Figure 5. *Tutein's Tomb*

affirmed the living continuity of mankind and the cosmos, but was ruled out by the modern scientific approach to nature. Additionally, it's said to reflect his mentorship under Beuys and personal experiences, as well as a nod to Van Gogh. Alchemical imagery of unstable resurrection, such as sunflower seeds, is repeatedly emphasized in his works; their biological traits cater to Kiefer's expressive needs, extending the spatial-temporal dimensions of the print series, endowing them with a more untamed meaning. The liberal use of seeds alongside black and white woodcuts creates an interesting contrast, with the work's consistent dark gray-brown tones providing a base. The poetic summary of woodcut language and precise capture of pain points are necessary for Kiefer's creation of this theme, as seen in *Ways of Worldly Wisdom: Hermann's Battle*, the handmade book *Die Hermannsschlacht*, *Brunhilde Grane*, and *The Rhine*. Kiefer made numerous paper woodcut attempts when creating the group portraits for the *Ways of Worldly Wisdom* series, placing German historical figures within a forest linked by tree rings. Donald Kuspit in 1988 identified "archeologism" as a distinctive trait of Kiefer's art, and its creation as a "free combination of numerous historical styles and references in a single work."

Regarding memories of homeland and reflections on the Third Reich, Anselm Kiefer's series of works embody a recurring struggle with himself. He appropriates objects, texts and images, the only "recollections" available to him, and integrates them into other settings, which he then uses to create works that eventually come to constitute a personal memory of the Third Reich and his own German heritage.⁶ In *The Red Sea*, Kiefer utilizes woodcuts, oil paint, shellac, emulsion to modify photographs, smearing them with lead strips. In creating *Tutein's Tomb*, he also incorporates straw alongside the aforementioned techniques. Both works emphasize the theme of the "zinc bath", containing detailed research into past traumatic memories, with the use of the bathtub imagery stemming from his interpretation of Third Reich memorabilia and personal experiences. Over two decades, Kiefer seems to be gradually constructing a theater of memory through his works, using it to internalize and construct "memories" of Germany's past that he only knows through secondary sources.⁶ This bearing of memory is carried through the printmaker's personal emotional trauma and the resonant interaction of selected material imageries, allowing observers to grasp common triggers of memory through sensory stimulation. More precisely, the sudden shift of collectivity into the manifest art form or phenomenon (das Erscheinende) is because the illusion transcends the mere subject. Each artwork unearths traces of mimetic activity, heralding conditions for reconciliation between the individual and the collective. Moreover, this collective memory is not detached from the subject but realized through the subject itself.⁷

The use of lead strips corresponds to alchemical beliefs where lead holds the potential to become gold, and the life energy and physical characteristics of straw, especially its golden hue, resembling that of gold. Similar to the ashes in *Ash Flower* that signify destruction and

the rebirthing sunflowers, this struggle is poignant and thought-provoking. The profound implications of such materials along with Kiefer's emotional intensity coalesce into a force that compels viewers to confront these deep themes. It is significant that the first time Kiefer introduced lead into his work was in the form of a lead palette, in *Tree with Palette* (1978), as if the use of such a personal motif had enabled him to take a step which was technically and aesthetically crucial for his art.

Printmakers, in selecting and manipulating materials, also face the challenge of finding a tacit understanding between humanity and objects. Essentially, when artists choose materials, they are not merely selecting physical objects; they are selecting themselves, opting for projection objects that share an isomorphic relationship with their psyche.⁸ Kiefer's printmaking strikes a perfect balance between the part of himself as the creative subject and the raw nature of the materials, and between man and nature. For example, through familiarization with and reconfiguration of sunflowers and their seeds among other herbaceous plants, he places his hope in the concept of transformation and rebirth, constructing a poetically silent yet potent spiritual world. In this subtle process, materials enhance the creator's emotions, embody their thought processes, and to some extent reflect the creator's life state at that time.

3.2 Case Analysis of Material Selection for Emotional Expression: Experience from the Mixed-Material Printmaking Course at Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts

In 2023, Professor Zhang Chunxia led the First Printmaking Studio in a multi-sensory exploration of the plasticity of different materials, facilitating a deeper understanding of materials. Since Duchamp, artists have habitually used found objects from their surroundings as creative materials, with creators often preparing a variety of materials based on personal preference and creative concepts. The rough texture of hand-rolled rope, the tough patterns of fabric scraps, and the softness of fallen leaves provided multidimensional experiences that fostered unique creative reflections. The professor's insights into mixed-media printmaking were profoundly enlightening and helpful: "The mysterious language of materials is only released through human exploration, and balancing human desires with the innate properties of materials is foundational to the creation of mixed-media prints. A good piece not only displays the unique nature of the material language but also reflects the creator's life state at that moment, representing a mutual recognition and integration between person and material. From unfamiliarity to proficiency, the selection of materials and the expansion of their language are key to producing visually novel and meaningful works. Allowing emotions and thoughts to merge freely through playful experimentation achieves a unity with nature, and thus the artwork is born."⁹ To understand these specific operations, the author attempted to create the first mixed-media print using multi-color linocut technique. Plastic pieces on decorative fabric were mottled and drooping, with loose and soft fabric edges; inspired by the first impression of a small beast wandering on a wasteland. The subsequent subconscious handling of materials by the printmaker should avoid the preconceived "pureness", as this feeling is a primary presentation and not a rule itself. The process advocates for endless mental flexibility and physical variation, manipulating various tools to change the mechanical inertia brought by tool transition, thus altering visual dependency.¹⁰ Burning the shape of the film, manually tearing the edge threads, cutting paper into different shapes, adjusting ink colors, and experimenting several times yielded a satisfying possibility. This naive and purely playful first attempt, allowed for an understanding of how the selection and experimentation of materials in the printmaking process intervene with thought processes and creative themes. Creating mixed-media prints is a creative and inspiring experience. Engaging in such necessary experimentation greatly aids subsequent creations of different print types, with this inspirational awareness playing a significant role. Through understanding the characteristics of materials, emotions are distilled and expressed more purely and directly. Artwork must have emotion, a style built on interest. It may diverge from traditional artistic methods or

conventional means, but it must convey a specific spiritual direction. Here, hasty or weak execution is a sign of spiritual numbness caused by a lack of artistic passion.¹¹



Figure 6. *Searching*, the first attempt at mixed-media printmaking

Fabric scraps form the main body of the composition. Their easily deconstructed, soft texture with suggestive surface patterns and veins give a sense of a living touch. The loose, gentle fabric threads at the edges spread capriciously across every corner of the canvas, creating a sense of weightlessness and enhancing the artist's intended portrayal of a state of drift and dispersal. The two rows of rubber discs at the top and bottom serve to organize the composition, with their bright yellow color softening the edges, giving a sense of controlled unease that is sharp, yet not confining. At the center of the fabric, two intentional damages have been made: the clean cuts from scissors enrich the visual effect, and the curved tearing at the bottom, paired with circular paper pieces, evokes drooping eyes. The abstract nature of the paper pieces and the expressive tension of the fabric fibers compensate for the inability to fully replicate the eyes. This rough yet personal touch is an excellent method of imparting personal emotion into the materials.

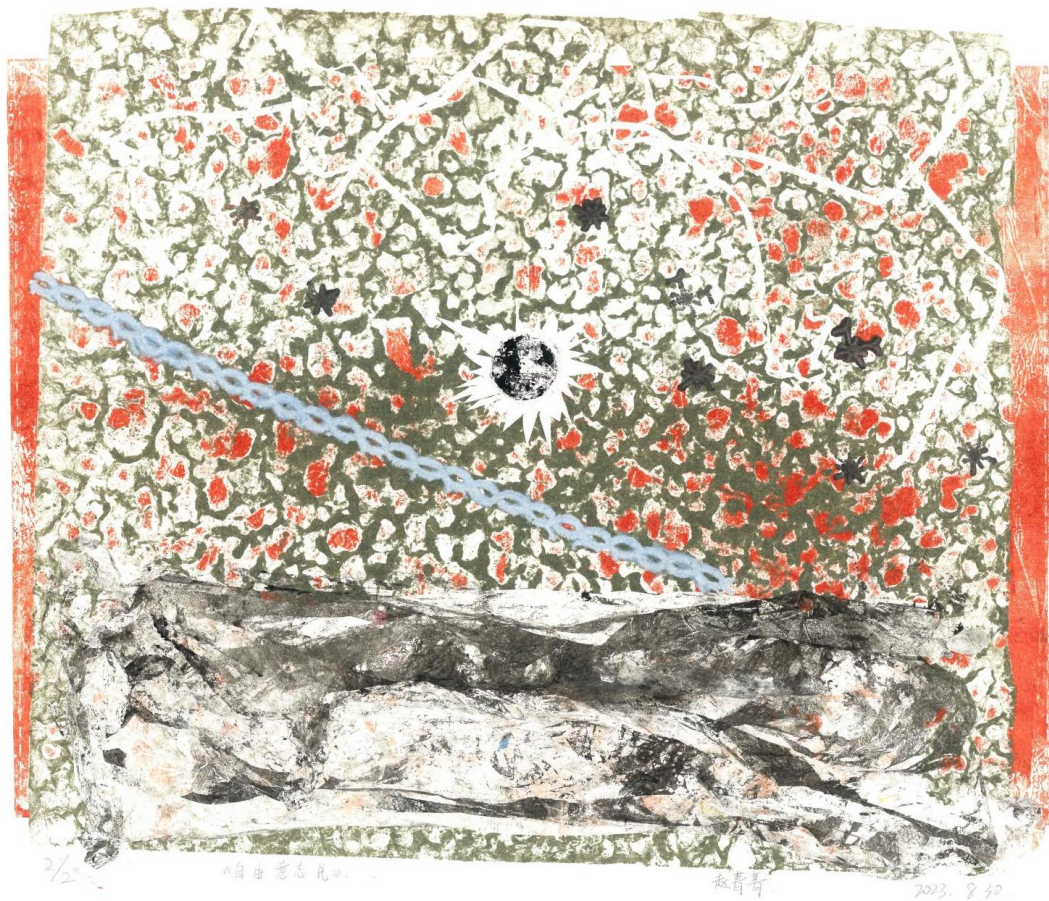


Figure 7. Work #1 *Free Will People*

Work #1

Title: *Free Will People*

Artist: Zhao Jingjing

Technique: Mixed-media and multi-color linocut printing

Size: 28 cm x 33 cm

Year: September 2023

		Creative process	Analysis
Materials	Lace fabric edges, plastic thread scraps, trash bags, handmade perforated paper, paper cutouts, transparent self-adhesive bags	The layered sky is formed by overlaying plastic self-adhesive bags and handmade perforated paper, soaked with paint and pressed through a printmaking press, forming moist dark green imprints; the highly pliable trash bag is manually creased to achieve the desired effects, with the exaggerated paper sun at the center drawing attention and establishing a pattern; the chain-like fabric strips serve to divide the image and alter its rhythm, while the dotted stars cutouts created with scissors add weight to the composition, and the plastic threads at the top are used to partially mitigate conflicts.	This is a figurative image where the purposeful transformation of various materials is easily discernible. The exaggerated paper sun at the center acts as a symbol of an energy radiation center, playing a role in stimulation and focus. The chain-like fabric strips suggest confrontation and conflict. The physical properties and the arrangement of these materials directly affect the conveyance of emotions, allowing viewers to feel the artist's emotional intentions through a multi-layered visual experience.
Visual content	A mesh-like sky, a rising chain, a mottled barren land, a heat-emitting sun, surrounding black stars, and traversing white lines		
Emotional keywords	Anxiety, conflict and confrontation, energy stimulation, excitement, trauma, dissociative factors, trends of rising and sinking		



Figure 8. Work #2 *Finale*

Work #2
 Title: *Finale*
 Artist: Yang Wenhui
 Technique: Mixed-media
 Size: 25 cm x 35 cm
 Year: September 2023

		Creative process	Viewer perspective
Materials	Hemp rope, cotton thread, gauze, carborundum, white glue	Sandblasting, material adhesion, ink mixing, plate making, inking, printing. The process of dipping hands in diluted white glue to adhere materials to the plate is particularly interesting; it allows for a clearer sensation of each material's characteristics. The direction of every clump and thread in the image can be controlled by fingers, offering more possibilities to the visual outcome.	In this image, the creator unravels materials like hemp rope, which are saturated with emotions, resulting from a high integration of visual and tactile effects. Delicate and fragile gauze wraps around the soil, and white glue imbues the entire painting with a misty aura. All materials sprawl under the wash of raindrops, immersing the viewer in the scene. This represents experience and conveys modes of thinking and cognition; it can momentarily pause the narrative; disrupt, dismantle, reorganize, and help reimagine the narrative; create space to reveal silent and unspoken stories; and act as assets and resources.
Visual content	In a damp, foggy world, dense clouds and swaying rain dominate. The earth's music pulsates from the core outward, breathing through the soil, clinging amongst plant roots, pulling up branches and weeds, breaking through the ground, and turning into dewdrops that coat soft plants as the night fades.		
Emotional keywords	Misty environment, clear consciousness, balance, ethereal, soothing		
Related speculation	The fine visual effect of the filamentous materials and the gray tones of the glue and carborundum embrace the overall misty atmosphere. The twisting, coiling hemp rope serves as the material for depicting plant shapes, conveying a sense of defense and inclusiveness. These smooth, edgeless parts constitute the concept of music emphasized by the creator.		



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Figure 9. Work #3 *Journey*

Work #3

Title: *Journey*

Artist: Zhu He

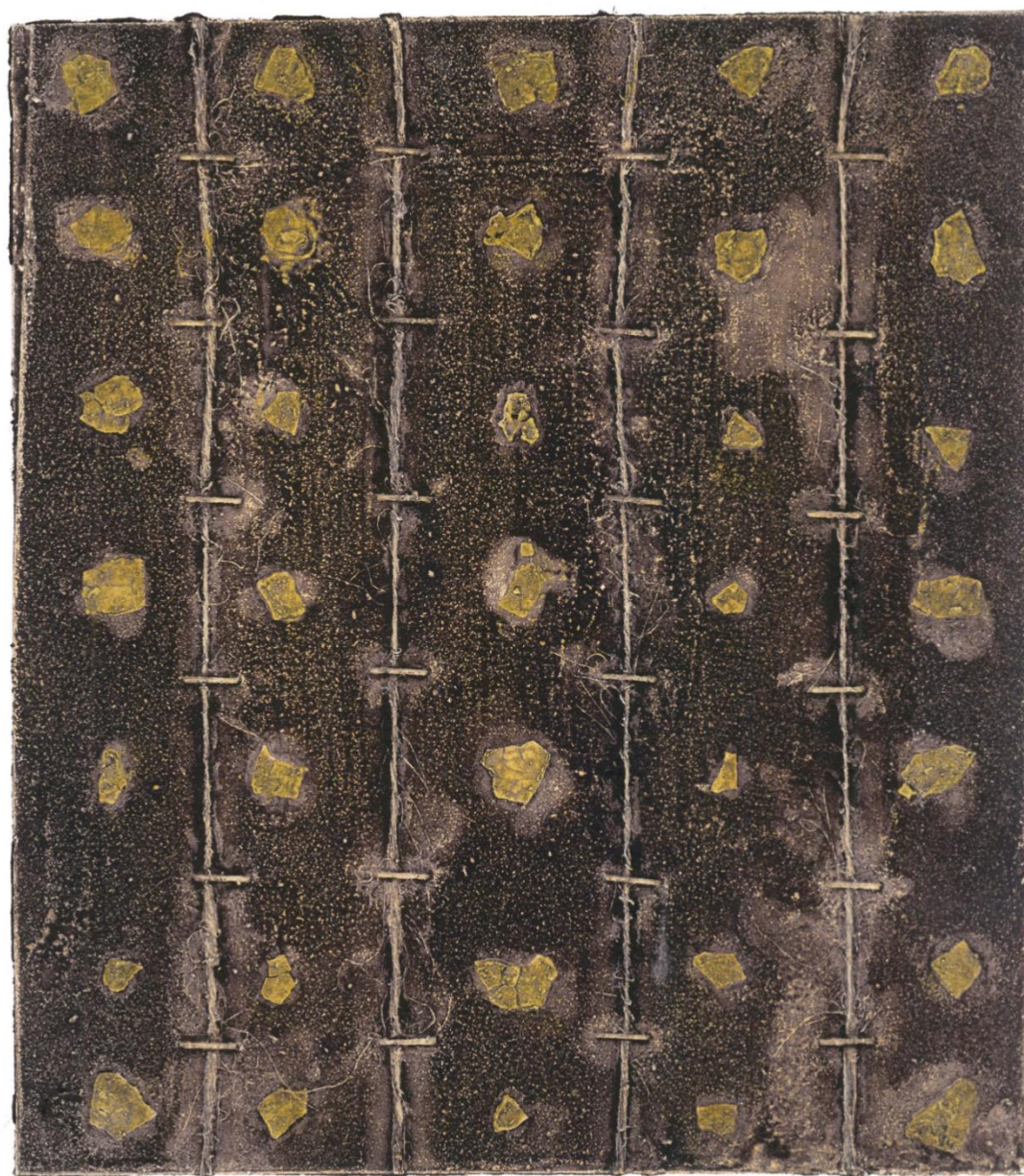
Technique: Mixed-media printmaking

Size: 23.5 cm x 20.5 cm

Year: September 2023

		Creative process	Viewer perspective
Materials	White glue, thick cardstock, carborundum, staple gun, yarn, grass stalks, mesh, sulfuric paper, sandpaper	Begin by using sandpaper to create the general form of the image, then add lines and other small divisions, and finally ink and print according to the composition.	Searching for materials that precisely anchor the values of one's psyche, this artwork is not limited by materials, avoiding seeking comfort in form as a standard answer. It orchestrates materials with great differences, conducting visual narratives in an orderly manner like a concerto: the tiny floating existences seem to roam in the vast universe, naively and clumsily searching for some "truth" the creator is seeking. The emotional core that seems to emerge from the image easily transcends time and space to resonate and communicate. This indefinable psychological phenomenon (fluctuation) is the aim of all artistic mediums; if the medium is right, it induces a similar fluctuation in the viewer's mind. This kind of complex fluctuation is the goal of the artwork. The accumulation of certain complexes leads to the refinement of the mind, which is the goal of art.
Visual content	Small houses and human-shaped floating objects, symbolizing moments in life where one drifts away from reality into dreams, fantasies, zoning out, and floating. Searching for a personal space, pursuing the comfort and joy of the spiritual world. The house suggests a connection to the real world, while the human-shaped floating objects represent the ongoing pursuit.		
Emotional keywords	Fantasy, release, pursuit, relaxation, comfort, confidence, satisfaction, calm, ease, warmth		

Related speculation	The staple gun connects materials with different textures such as mesh and paper, and divides the space, giving the image multiple possibilities. The yarn in orange-yellow reaffirms the outlines of the figures and houses. The twisted edge imprints strengthen the sense of release and pursuit.
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Figure 10. Work #4 *Life*

Work #4
 Title: *Life*
 Artist: Zhu He
 Technique: Mixed-media printmaking
 Size: 23.5 cm x 20.5 cm
 Year: September 2023

		Creative process	Viewer perspective
Materials	White glue, thick cardstock, carborundum, eggshells, yarn, staple gun	First, spread the carborundum evenly on the surface of the thick cardstock while maintaining a uniform base in order to highlight on the main content of the image. Next, place the eggshell fragments in a regular pattern on the surface, and then connect them with yarn. Ink according to the needs of the image, and finally print.	All materials are layered after being sorted according to certain properties. Through this rigorous planning by the creator, the simplicity of the work interestingly contrasts with the static and balanced emotion it presents.
Visual content	A regular arrangement of dots and lines, expressing a process of self-ordering and static contemplation.		
Emotional keywords	Peace, zoning out, stillness		
Related speculation	Eggshells, a material rich in metaphorical meaning, are reborn on the paper surface after being processed by the press. The fibrous hemp rope is firmly and rationally divided by the staple gun, and the regular layout provides a sense of security.		

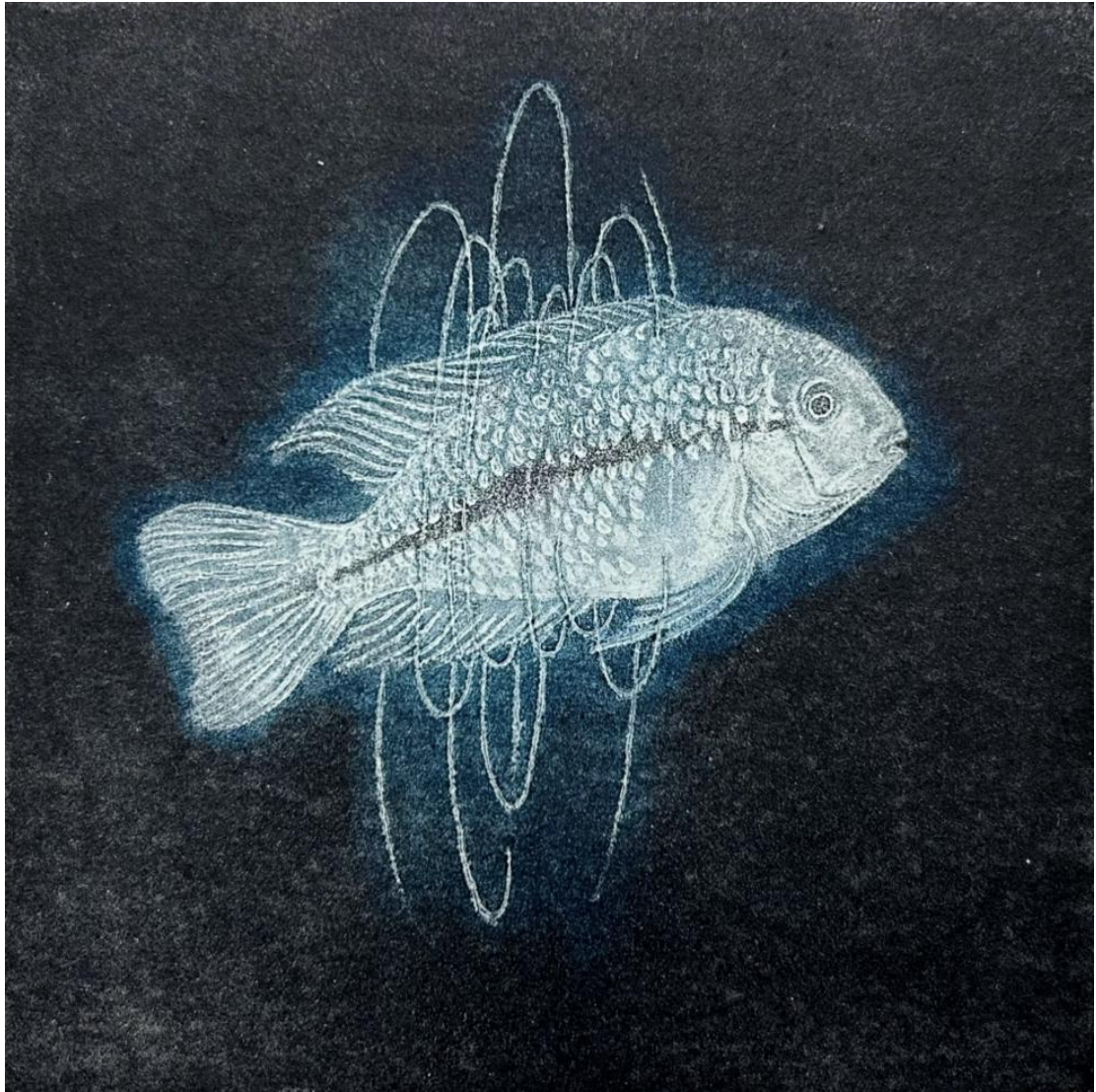


Figure 11. Work #5 *Me*

Work #5

Title: *Me*

Artist: Ji Wenqi

Technique: Mixed-media carborundum collagraph printmaking

Size: 20 cm x 20 cm

Year: September 2023

		Creative process	Viewer perspective
Materials	White glue, carborundum	Apply glue on white base, evenly spray carborundum, outline with pencil, dilute white glue, create fish shape from light to dark and dim to bright, outline thread shapes, evenly apply glue base on fish to create a glowing effect, apply black ink first, then colored ink for the fish.	The artist uses the carborundum collagraph technique to create a very figurative fish. The materials consistently serve the artist's subjective consciousness. In an era centered on materials and mixed-media, the distance between art and object is bridged, blurring the boundaries between types of painting and definitions of what constitutes art become increasingly ambiguous. Figurativism and abstraction, process and result are all given new meanings. The realistic style and detail work showcase the tolerance of the carborundum collagraph technique for expressing styles, highlighting, more than other works, how materials serve the creative subject.
Visual content	A glowing sea bream swimming in the dark night sky, encircled and entangled by numerous threads		
Emotional keywords	Pain, struggle, memory, inability to escape reality, endless darkness		
Related speculation	To convey the image's meaning more intuitively, the small fish floating aimlessly is rendered with delicate strokes, emphasizing its unsupported existence. The contrast in brightness between the subject and the background enhances the narrative of isolation and helplessness.		



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Figure 12. Work #6 *Imagine*

Work #6
 Title: *Imagine*
 Artist: Duan Kai
 Technique: Mixed-media carborundum collagraph
 Size: 20 cm x 30 cm
 Year: September 2023

		Creative process	Viewer perspective
Materials	Wood board, glue, mesh, wire, adhesive bandages	First, the main elements of the image are drawn using the carborundum collagraph technique, then various materials are placed on the image to experiment with different compositions. Finally, materials that either are personally appealing or convey the desired emotions are chosen and affixed to the image. Consider the overall image structure during the inking process, and complete the printing.	The creator favors combinations of cultural imagery and materials of different textures, cleverly organizing the desired emotional atmosphere. On the granular surface made of silicon carbide, white latex is used to paint the specific character image needed. Based on the tension of the composition and the theme, materials such as mesh, wire, and adhesive bandages are appropriately planned in the image. The commonalities, iconic nature, tactile sense, and indirectness of printmaking and patterns allow printmaking to transcend the constraints of being either non-figurative or abstract. The artist favors a combination of cultural imagery and different material textures, skillfully creating the desired emotional atmosphere. On the granular surface made with carborundum, white glue is used to paint a specific character image needed by the artist. Starting from the tension and theme of the composition, materials
Visual content	The main area of the composition is characterized by mottled bright colors and crisscrossing irregular lines, with Lennon's face emerging from the dark hues. The presence of adhesive bandages and the overall dark tone suggest that the emotions the image aims to convey are not optimistic.		
Emotional keywords	Victimization, silencing, submission, confinement		

			such as mesh, wire, and adhesive bandages are appropriately planned within the image. The commonalities, a sense of symbolism, tactile sensation, and indirectness of printmaking and patterns allow the print to transcend the confines of being either figurative or abstract.
Related speculation	The mesh obscures half of the space, symbolizing confinement along with the stubborn wire. The blurred treatment of the mouth implies a deprivation of speech. The addition of adhesive bandages enhances the sense of harm, creating an overall heavy atmosphere.		

INTEGRATED PRINTING

glue sand mixture technique
make a test strip before your composition

a small nylon oil paint brush and a large bristle brush
a grease pencil for draft
some silicon carbide powder, kaolin, protein powder
white and other oil paints; several printing oil colors
Prepare white latex mixed water solution with a ratio of one to two and one to one respectively, and prepare pure white latex aside

Drawing Process:
1. Transfer the sketch onto the sand plate using a grease pencil or carbon paper.
2. Evenly brush a layer of 2:1 white glue solution as a base.
3. Complete the image by using different ratios of glue according to the tonal values.

1. Seal the sand-based plate once with a white glue solution at a ratio of 1:2 and use a hair dryer to dry it. (Ensure that the layer is thin and evenly spread, with no unevenness or flaking. The glue layer will wrap the sand-based plate, making the subsequent plate-making process smoother by reducing the original roughness of the sand surface.)

2. Repeat step 1 in the area below the second grid, applying progressively less glue in the previous grids.

3. Starting from the third grid, use a white glue solution at a ratio of 1:1. After drying, continue to use the 1:1 solution in the fourth grid, and proceed similarly to grid 5. (At this point, the 1:1 white glue solution is applied three times.)

4. Apply pure white glue (it is recommended to use a nylon paint brush) to the seventh grid (starting from the third row), and then move to the next grid. Apply the eighth grid, and continue similarly until the third application of pure glue is completed (starting from the fifth row).

5. Mix white glue with protein powder, and apply it to the last grid.
• 1:2 • 1:1
• pure white glue
• glue sand mixture

6. Use fine sandpaper with a grit of 1500 to polish the final glue-powder grid to make it smooth, serving as the brightest area in the image.
This process produces nine tonal variations and one highlight

Printing Process:
1. Taking black printing oil colors and add one-third the amount of oil paints and kaolin.
2. Take a small amount of white printing oil colors and add one-third oil paints and linseed oil.
3. Fully apply the black pigment to the plate using a scraper.
4. Wipes the plates with a wiping cloth (Using a pounding or rotating motion)
5. When there is a small amount of residual ink, use a circular motion with tracing paper to wipe it off. After the general wiping is complete, use ochre oil paints to remove the final thin layer of ink on the plate. After that, use clean tracing paper to remove the ochre layer. Apply white pigment with a soft ink roller (ensure this step is done thinly and sparsely, so that the ink appears translucent on the palette). Soak the paper in water for 4-5 minutes, then proceed with machine printing.

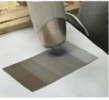








Figure 13. Carborundum collagraph technique class notes

The carborundum collagraph technique, due to its tolerance for expressions and sensitivity to detailed plate presentation, acts as an excellent harmonizer, seamlessly integrating various material elements of the image. The fine layering of glue on the evenly granulated carborundum expands the creator's expressive space and contemplative potential, where each step of the process reflects the nuanced emotional interpretations afforded by the material's characteristics. In today's era, which emphasizes individual creativity, the representational expression of physical and chemical properties in printmaking, along with the technical sensitivity to the characteristics of materials and tools and their "depth of quality," undoubtedly infuse printmaking with vitality. This vitality stems from the application of experimental technical processes.¹⁶ The creators are meticulous in their themes, flexibly extracting the needed forms and media from natural materials, freely transforming them to

convey the desired internal spirit. This directness in emotional expression also endows the material with a living spirit,¹⁷ an essential trait for a successful print.

Through the interpretation and analysis of the above works, it is evident that although the choice of materials and methods of expression vary significantly, creators in the process of printmaking rigorously tailor their material selection to serve themes driven by inner emotions. In this process, all material components are refined to eliminate rough edges, powerfully proclaiming the creator's spiritual core in this tranquil state. Moreover, different artists' social experiences and their perceptions of the world result in varied interpretations and renditions of materials. The same material can convey entirely different meanings in the works of different artists, with the creators' emotions and the characteristics of the materials being processed and blended during the creative process. Within the atmosphere of the entire print, it is both influenced by the spirit embodied in the whole piece and contributes to the overall ambiance. Thus, while the media used in different arts may appear completely different on the surface, be it sound, color, or text, their innermost media are fundamentally the same: the ultimate goal is to eliminate their external differences and reveal their inherent unity. This ultimate goal (cognition), through subtle fluctuations of the mind, reaches into the human psyche. These subtle fluctuations, while aiming at the same ultimate goal, have different internal movements and thus differ. This indefinable mental phenomenon (fluctuation) is the goal of all artistic media. A certain complex of fluctuation is the goal of the artwork. The accumulation of some complexes leads to a refinement of the mind, which is the goal of art. Art is thus indispensable and purposeful. The appropriate media discovered by artists are the material forms of their personal mental fluctuations.¹⁸

5. Conclusion

This paper explores the interplay between diverse expressive capabilities of different materials in mixed-media printmaking and the emotional expression of the creators. It is evident that the choice and application of materials in printmaking not only affect the ways and extent of creators' emotional expressions but also stimulate the viewers' visual and tactile senses through their color, texture, pattern, and hardness, thereby eliciting emotional resonance and feedback.

From the visual and tactile properties of materials, they can generally be categorized as follows:

Artificial Soft Materials: Soothing and Enveloping Sensory Experiences

Materials such as gauze, fabric, hemp rope, silk threads, yarn, and plastic bags, with their unique tactile properties due to their fibrous structure, are soft and smooth, often without sharp edges, evoking a sense of calm and peace. Commonly used in everyday life for warmth, coverage, or wrapping, these materials have established basic experiences and emotional associations for people. The physical contact in everyday use makes it easy for these materials to evoke a "imagined physical experience" in viewers when used in artwork, thereby resonating on an emotional level. In visual arts, these artificial soft materials can evoke memories of bodily and tactile sensations through visual cues. For instance, the soft texture of gauze and thread might remind one of skin contact, while the lightness and moldability of plastic bags can convey a sense of temporariness and fragility. Artists often use these materials to express warmth, protection, fragility, or even certain hidden emotions, blending the physical touch of the materials with emotional experience.

Natural Organic Materials: Vitality and Emotional Resonance

Materials like grass stalks, eggshells, plant seeds, sand, and soil possess a natural texture and primal vitality. These materials, with their inherent roughness and simplicity, often trigger

strong emotional resonance in viewers. Their natural qualities frequently awaken deep emotions towards life, nature, and the earth, sometimes even a sense of familiarity due to their compositional similarity to the human body.

Metal Products: Symbols of Strength and Order

Materials like staple guns, wire, tin, and lead, with their hard or austere textures, are often used to express an undeniable presence. In artistic creation, these materials typically symbolize strength, iron laws, authority, and order. Their physical properties ensure that they have a strong visual and tactile impact, making viewers immediately feel their inherent deterrence and presence upon contact. The rigidity and stability of metal materials often make them suitable for depicting strong structures and a sense of unshakeable order in artworks. For instance, the cold hardness of wire and lead can express a form of oppression or confinement, while staple guns may symbolize a coercive and irreversible force. Through these materials, artists can convey their reflections and critiques on power, control, and social order.

In summary, the visual perception properties of materials provide rich means for emotional expression in artistic creation. The enveloping warmth of artificial soft materials, the vitality and naturalness of organic materials, and the strength and order of metal products not only endow artworks with unique material characteristics but also deepen their expressive effects through the connection between sensory and emotional experiences. As Rudolf Arnheim states in *Visual Thinking*, visual and tactile senses, shape, color, movement, humidity, pain, pressure, vibration, and so on, can be easily joined into various explicit and highly complex spatial and temporal structures, making these senses excellent (or ideal) media and venues for rational activities to exercise and develop.¹⁹

The interaction mechanism between materials and emotions through visual perception brings about effects that allow the core of the artwork to be interpreted or reconstructed from multiple angles during the creation process. In the process of artistic creation, the interaction between materials and emotions is manifested not only through tactile and visual senses but also profoundly affects the core interpretation of the artwork through complex visual perception mechanisms. The physical properties of materials such as texture, color, and shape combined with the creator's emotional expression form a subtle yet intense interaction mechanism. This mechanism is reflected not only in the selection and arrangement of materials but also in the transfer of "voice" between the material and the creative subject. In this process, materials as independent media gradually merge with the creator's emotions and thoughts, ultimately manifesting a unique artistic language in the artwork.

The mechanism of interaction between materials and emotions through visual perception allows the core of the artwork to be continually interpreted or reconstructed from multiple perspectives during both creation and viewing. The chaotic and unstable medium, after the creator's careful extraction and deliberate arrangement of realistic implications, ultimately presents a unique visual effect in the two-dimensional world. In this process, visual perception is not just a passive receiver but also a bridge for communication between materials and creators. When materials are equally "flattened" onto a plane by the creator's careful arrangement, the inherent emotional expression transcends the boundaries between material and creator, displaying a deep interaction of emotions and thoughts. The combination of materials and techniques in the printmaking process embodies the core exchange between the subject and object, revealing the deep connection between materials and emotional expression. Each material carries its inherent physical properties and symbolic meanings, and when creators select and process these materials, they are essentially using these properties and symbols to convey their inner emotions and thoughts. Through the interaction of materials and emotions, artworks unfold visually and intellectually, providing viewers with a rich and profound aesthetic experience.

Hegel in *Aesthetics* proposes that art, to reach the supersensible world of exhaustive depth of thought, i.e. the “beyond,” harmonizes purely external, sensory, perishable things with pure thought—harmonizing nature and finite reality with the infinite freedom inherent in the understanding of things.²⁰ Throughout the history of printmaking development, creators have never ceased their exploration of emotional conveyance and unique printmaking language in the selection and use of physical materials.

The purpose of this paper is to organize the relationship between printmaking material selection and emotional expression, and through case studies, it demonstrates the specific applications of different materials in emotional conveyance. However, the study also has limitations, such as the limited scope of material experiments and investigations, necessitating further expansion in the study of material types and creative techniques in the future.

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