Influence of Art Illustrations.

In the reproduction of art the process has become an educational force. It involves faithful reproductions as to drawing and colour, tone, “feeling”, and all that is in a picture – as distinct from a black-and-white, a monochrome or photographic reproduction or a colour rendering of a draughtsman or colourist, more or less unskilled – is faithfully reproduced, and can be brought within the means of the poorest. Everything that the camera can bring to light, and every shade and tone of the picture thus made, can be perfectly reproduced by this process in the printed proof. The marks of time, the mellowed signs of knowledge, large and small, of the artist of varnishes and colours, are alike faithfully rendered, and given skillful use of the means employed, and reverent handling of the subject, the blenishes and faults, as well as the evidences of the skill of the artist, are alike truthfully depicted. If the result sometimes all it should be, the fault is not with the process, but with the means employed in securing the result. Discrimination and skill are absolutely necessary. Theory and practice are not sufficient. Where love has been bestowed on the original, love will be required in its reproduction. If sometimes one’s heart aches at the photos-engraved and reproduced caricature of a masterpiece, it is usually because a hand unskilled or untrained has been used, and has tried to improve on the original.

In addition to the work of the camera, some histrionism of the subject will often be found necessary in order to obtain a good result. This is especially true in relation to the reproduction of art works. To attempt to produce by three colours alone – the usual yellow, red, and blue inks – a full colour effect by oil painting by George Morland would be to seek failure; whilst the transparency and delicate colouring of a Richter Foster drawing will be more faithfully rendered by the three-colour or by the four-colour process. Certainly in the production of a work of this kind skill and thought, and a certain amount of sensitiveness, are needed on the part of the printer as well as on that of the photo-engraver.

Chromo-Lithography.

In the palmy days of chromo-lithography, J. M. W. Turner found time to put the finishing touches to the more important of the stones from which his reproduced works were to be printed. The three-colour process of Smootherfeld reached its height in this country, how very essential it is now that there should be sympathetic handling of reproductions of high art both in the studio and in the press-room.

It has been urged against the process that the use of what in the trade is termed “art” paper, or chromo-paper – i.e. paper having a clay surface – for printing, and the effect of the dots or individual characters, is fatal to perfect artistic effect. Both contem- poraries may be safely granted. But except in the cases of optical experiments which do not come under the designation of art production – the result caused by the use of the dots for all practical purposes be got rid of by suitable grainings of the paper after printing. Here it may also be maintained that many of the patterns used in grading process work impair rather than enhance the beauty of the printed work. Coated papers as generally used to give a sharp, clean impression, but in work of high class character they may be dispensed with. Several manufacturers have perfected an all-aniline paper which, while not so easy to print upon, gives for reproductions of fine paintings and for the highest class of work results superior in many respects to those obtained by the use of art paper. Amongst the many paintings which have been reproduced by the lithopresser process, perhaps the finest are comprised in a well-known series of Great Masters, many of which are as large as 20in. by 15in. The series comprises examples by Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Frans Hals, Botticelli, da Vinci, Holbein, Velasquez, Reynolds, Morland, Rowlandson, Gainsborough, Greuze, Turner, and nearly every English and foreign master.

In lighter, ephemeral art, also, the process has been singularly successful, and in some branches its adoption has been almost universal. This is especially true in respect to picture postcards. Although it is a matter of dispute as to which country produced the first pictorial postcard, it is unquestionably the fact that the first arti- stic picture postcards were produced in Great Britain, and for some time English postcard publishers sent considerable quantities to various European countries, notwithstanding the heavy tariffs. The Ger- man – a great postcard consuming na- tion – were not slow to appreciate the British-made article, and soon made pro- duce in England by this means. The commercial and economical process almost impos- sible to the British engraver and printer.

Commercial Printing and Advertising.

A process capable of meeting the demands of discriminating art lovers, dealers, and publishers must of necessity be a powerful instrument in the hands of commercial men. A method that can be used to reproduce faith- fully an Eastern carpet of priceless value is naturally a weapon to be used in the 20th century carpet manufacturer or vendor. The process which has been employed to repre- sent with such fascinating effect the wonderful adaptability of the method – the wonderful examples of the famous etchers the Mun, Mang, Ho, Fornasari, and other periods of Chinese porcelain is easier- ly seized upon to illustrate the wares of the manufacturer or vendor. The use of this method in the preparation of lists and catalogues for business firms can readily be apprehended. Every kind of article can be reproduced in colour instead of in black-and-white, as formerly, and the process is, of course, equally suitable for representing such diverse objects as jewells, motor-cars, and dresses. A catalogue of a manufacturing con- federation lies before the writer at the moment. It contains reproductions of many pages of sweets, chocolates, plain and otherwise, cakes and confections of various kinds, all reproduced by this process so faithfully as to appear as if one had but to take them from the printed page. To multiply instances would be to repeat the story of the all-embracing usefulness of this interesting process for commercial houses, the wares and commodities advertised, and can be used to give a sharp, clean impression, but in work of high class character they may be dispensed with. Several manufacturers have perfected an all-aniline paper which, while not so easy to print upon, gives for reproductions of fine paintings and for the highest class of work results superior in many respects to those obtained by the use of art paper. Amongst the many paintings which have been reproduced by the lithopresser process, perhaps the finest are comprised in a well-known series of Great Masters, many of which are as large as 20in. by 15in. The series comprises examples by Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Frans Hals, Botticelli, da Vinci, Holbein, Velasquez, Reynolds, Morland, Rowlandson, Gainsborough, Greuze, Turner, and nearly every English and foreign master.

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HALF TONE PINKAU DOT & DASH CODING: 1926 onwards

In 1926 Pinkau changed to a simple dot and dash coding as follows:

1 Dot = 1
2 Dots = 2
3 Dots = 3
4 Dots = 4
5 Dots = 5

This dot and dash coding occurs in the following places:

1. On the right side only of the stamp box. Reads from top to bottom. A favourite position.
2. On all four sides of the stamp box. The left hand side of the stamp box is the flanturned position. The top is the hundreds position and so on clockwise. Not much used, mainly about 1927/27.
3. On the address lines. In this case read from left to right.
4. On the centre dividing line. Read from top to bottom.
5. In post WW2 production the code is given its own (fairly) line. But really post WW2 is another story.

As I said previously I put together a tentative outline of the dot and dash code in the 1920's and 1930's. I then asked Bob Conrich to help with his Bermuda collection, which has a number of half tone Pinkau cards in it. As said in the Bermuda article, I was surprised to get from Bob a mountain of data on the 1930's dot and dash code. There was so much of it, I was forced to change to recording it on a monthly basis. This monthly basis for the 1930's, leads to a very accurate estimate of the coded batch production rate. I should say here that his Bermuda result is not just confined to Bermuda. It gives Pinkau's 1930's coding for whole world production. Contrary to popular opinion, coding was not very subtle, it depends on finding the weakest link and here this just happens to be Bob's beloved Bermuda. Scary Bob!

Five years later I asked Bob Conrich to help with his Bermuda collection, which has a number of half tone Pinkau cards in it. As said in the Bermuda article, I was surprised to get from Bob a mountain of data on the 1930's dot and dash code. There was so much of it, I was forced to change to recording it on a monthly basis. This monthly basis for the 1930's, leads to a very accurate estimate of the coded batch production rate. I should say here that his Bermuda result is not just confined to Bermuda. It gives Pinkau's 1930's coding for whole world production. Contrary to popular opinion, coding was not very subtle, it depends on finding the weakest link and here this just happens to be Bob's beloved Bermuda. Scary Bob!

The perfecting of this had no immediate influence on book illustrations. Although publishers had quickly and unanimously embraced the means of illustrating their books by the speedy and economical half-tone method, they showed a general unwillingness to believe that the rendering of faithful colour reproductions was possible by an enlargement or extension of the same process. The first book of any importance to be illustrated throughout the three-colour process was "War Impressions" published in 1901 by Messrs. Adam and Charles Black, of Oxford. The plates were engraved by the Heitnisch Colourtype Process, and printed on "Miracle", two revolution presses by George W. Jones. This work was quickly followed by the publications of "Japan", "Happy England" and other works by the same firm, and was the first of a series of books published by Messrs. A. and C. Black and of similar works from top to bottom. A favourite position.

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Paper and Ink.

The paper used for the reproduction of these three and four colour illustrations is termed ‘art’ or chromo paper. This is made by applying a mixture of clay and glue to ordinary paper, which is termed the body paper, and is a compound of varying proportions of wood pulp, esparto grass, and other ingredients. The mixing and grinding before cutting and despatching to the printer is the susceptibility of the clay-coating, but also and particularly to the plates. A set of rollers should be "tack", or they will not transfer the ink properly to the plates. A set of rollers should be kept for colour work only, in addition to a "prima" of the subject. Few printers, for instance, would be unwise enough to attempt to use the three primaries alone in the reproduction of a strong Morland or a Gainsborough landscape.

Printing inks being a combination mainly of pigments and varnishes ground together in certain proportions, the better and more suitable the materials used, and the more perfectly mixed and ground, the cleaner and more brilliant the printed result. The better the quality also, the greater amount of pigment to the point, whilst the greater fineness of grinding gives a larger covering area, cleaner working, and therefore a greater output. It is unnecessary to stop and wash the forme when three and four colour work is produced simultaneously — i.e., when the three colours are superimposed on each other... 

Rolled rolls carry all the weight of the work, and should be equally "sympathetic" to the nature of the subject.

In every case, it is necessary to secure clean, sharp impressions, it is desirable that the inks be of such quality and consistency and have such "sympathy" with the paper being used, that the forme is practically cleaned of all ink deposits on the plates by the rollers after each impression. The rollers for colour work should be fairly firm, have a good face, and not too much "tack", or they will not transfer the ink properly to the plates. A set of rollers should be kept for colour work only, in addition to a spare set in case of accidents. These should be kept in dry place, as one of the chief ingredients in a roller is glue, which is readily affected by the medium of three presses linked to each other by applying a mixture of clay and glue to ordinary paper, which is termed the body paper, and is a compound of varying proportions of wood pulp, esparto grass, and other ingredients. The mixing and grinding before cutting and despatching to the printer is the susceptibility of the clay-coating, but also and particularly to the plates. A set of rollers should be "tack", or they will not transfer the ink properly to the plates. A set of rollers should be kept for colour work only, in addition to a "prima" of the subject. Few printers, for instance, would be unwise enough to attempt to use the three primaries alone in the reproduction of a strong Morland or a Gainsborough landscape.

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