

What is a Monotype?

A monotype is a one of a kind, hand-pulled print. An artist creates an image with paint or ink on a smooth plate (usually plexiglass or metal), and transfers the art to paper with contact and pressure between the plate and the paper. The pressure of printing creates a texture not possible when painting directly on paper. After the paper is squeezed against the still-wet image on the plate, it's literally peeled off the plate by the artist, and this stage of printing is called "pulling", since we are pulling the print off the plate.

The images are created with ink, paint, water-soluble crayons, or any medium that will leave the plate and stick to the paper when they're pressed together. There are no permanent lines or etch marks on the plate, so the image is created solely by the artists' manipulation of the medium.



Monotypes are unique, because only one impression of the art can be pulled from the plate before the ink is gone. (Some people refer to monotypes as the only original art printed in an edition of one.) After the initial print is pulled, there may be just enough pigment left on the plate to pull a second, faint impression, called a ghost. The ghost (or cognate), is a much lighter reprint, with substantial variations from the first print, and is more of a transparent suggestion of the first image. A ghost print can be treated as an "under-painting", giving the artist creative license to re-work the image with more ink or paint, and alter the ghost print to create an entirely new, one of a kind work of art.

What is a Monoprint?

The terms monotype and monoprint are sometimes used interchangeably, but they represent two distinct printmaking processes. A monotype is made by drawing or painting on a smooth surface, and transferring the image to a sheet of paper. It's a singular printmaking method, since there are no permanent lines or marks on the plate. A monoprint plate has etched lines or drawn elements that can be repeated in a series or edition. This underlying image remains the same, and is common to each print in a given series. The artist may vary the colors, or the density of the inks in each image, creating a unique impression, but some permanent element of the plate carries the same design or markings repeatedly over to each print, making it possible to print multiples in an edition.