

Pop Art Monoprints

In the style of Roy Lichtenstein

(art history; art + social studies)

Inspired by action-filled comic book frames, Lichtenstein's canvases were engulfed by enormous faces and blasting jet planes, painted with intense colors and large, obvious printer's dots. A true Pop Artist, he took something he saw in everyday culture around him and raised it to the level of fine art.

This lesson looks at pop culture imagery today and describes it in comic book-style prints. Four colors are printed in just two press passes, with the black lines overprinting the color. Slow-drying water-based inks provide intense color on dry paper.

Grade Levels 7-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. View images of Lichtenstein's paintings and other Pop artist's work. Suggested resources:
[Pop Art series from Take 5 Art Prints \(72203-1002\)](#)
[Who is the Artist? Pop Art VHS video \(70051-1006\)](#)
[Taschen Art Books: Lichtenstein \(70033-1059\)](#)
2. Look through a magnifying glass at printed material. Similar to Pointillism, Ben-day dots are placed in relationship to one another to give the illusion of color and depth.

Process

1. Gather photos of pop culture in current newspapers and magazines. Fashion, music, politics, sports, and movies are all subjects to explore. Look for full size pages or make photocopies of images scaled to fit the printing plate. Closely cropped images that push past the image's borders will look like comic book frames.
2. Place tracing paper over the photos and create contour line drawings with a pencil. Determine which lines are important and which are not, keeping backgrounds simple. Plan solid black outlines, large areas of color and shapes shaded with dots. Limit colors to black, red, yellow and blue. Remove photo frequently to check progress.



Materials

[Akua Kolor Inks](#),
Hansa Yellow (40311-4704),
Crimson Red (40311-3164),
Phthalo Blue (40311-5164) and
Jet Black (40311-2044)
Retarder (40311-1004)
Enough for approx. 25 prints
[Plastic Printing Plates 8" x 10"](#)
(18908-1952), two per student
(may be reused)
[Speedball Lettering Nib style B, size 5](#)
(20909-1052), one per student
[Standard Dip Pen Holder](#)
(22930-0000) one per student
[Blick Scholastic Wonder White Round, size 4 \(05857-1004\)](#) one per student
[Blick Tracing Paper 11" x 14"](#),
(10609-2015), one sheet per student
[Economy Artist's Tape 1/2"](#)
(23001-0050)
[Ink Dropper \(04958-0000\)](#),
package of 5
[Plastic Palettes \(03068-1006\)](#)
[Blick 906 Model II Etching Press](#)
(45033-1010)

Process, continued

NOTE: Comic-book action words or conversation "balloons" will need to be reversed. Turn the tracing paper over and draw words on the back side.

3. Distribute a nickel-sized amount of each color in palettes. Use the eyedropper to add a drop of retarder to ink, mix thoroughly. Place styrene plate over the drawing, non-glare side facing up. Draw a line around the edge of the plate for placement and tape the corners down to the tracing paper with a piece of artist's tape.
4. Make the color plate first, beginning with yellow ink, followed by red and then blue. Work from left to right to avoid dragging through the ink. Use the dip pen to create dots and fine lines, the brush to fill large areas. The ink coverage should be solid, don't apply too thinly or allow to form thick puddles. Set aside and repeat for the black plate.

Akua Kolor is extremely slow drying, remaining open for hours and even days in a humid environment, so there's no need to rush or to rewet. Corrections can be made by simply wiping the ink off the plate with a paper towel or cotton swab.

NOTE: Akua Kolors will clean up with soap and water, but avoid contact with clothing.

4. Tape blank sheet of newsprint to the press bed and trace around a blank plastic plate with a pencil for position. Make a few ink strokes on the blank plate and determine press setting with a scratch sheet of paper. Pressure should be light, but enough to pull the ink from the plate.
5. Determine printmaking paper position according to the marks. Use a piece of artist's tape to secure the paper on one side, so it is hinged. Print on dry paper, Akua Kolor eliminates soaking and blotting. Return plate to the press bed, lower paper and press blankets and turn until press bed is completely through. Lift blankets, pull back paper on its hinge and inspect. If solid areas appear too light, brush on a little more color without moving the plate, and pass through the press again.

5. Remove the color plate and place the black plate on the press bed, using the marks for position. Repeat printmaking process.

Clean up

1. Clean all surfaces with a dry paper towel, then use liquid dish soap and water. Wash hands with liquid soap, then wipe with a dry paper towel before rinsing with water.

Options

1. If a press is not available, you can hand-print using the [Blick Economy Baron](#) (42910-1004) or [Polypropylene Brayer](#) (40100-1008). Plates will need to be coated with [Akua Kolor Transparent Base](#) (40309-1000) prior to inking for good release.



Color plate



Black plate

National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

5-8

Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas.

9-12

Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use.

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

5-8

Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

9-12

Students evaluate and defend the validity of sources for content and the manner in which subject matter, symbols, and images are used in the students' works and in significant works by others

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

5-8

Students analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

9-12

Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art.