

pressing matters

CELEBRATING MODERN PRINTMAKING

PICK & MIX FROM
10 ISSUES

STEREO -TYPE



COMMON EXPRESSIONS.

They pop up in normal conversation, but do we really know what on earth we are actually saying. Sometimes everyday words come from surprising origins, in this case letterpress printing...*

In printing, a stereotype, also known as a cliché, was originally a 'solid plate of type metal, cast from a papier-mâché or plaster mould taken from the surface of a former of type' used for printing instead of the original.

The composition of individual cast metal types into lines with leading and furniture, tightly locked into a forme, was labor-intensive and costly. The introduction of the stereotype radically changed the way books, magazine articles and other forms of literature, were reprinted, saving printers the expense of resetting while freeing the original type for other jobs. Over time, stereotype became a metaphor for any set of ideas repeated identically or with only minor changes.

MIND YOUR P'S & Q'S



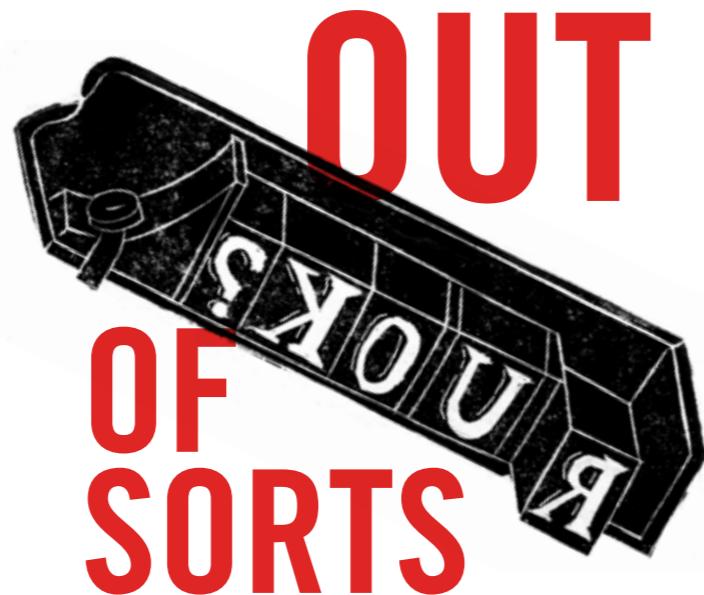
To most people, minding our p's and q's means to remember our pleases and thank yous. However the phrase has a number of sources, the most popular one being print related. In early hot metal typesetting days individual letters were distributed into the typecase either before or after printing.

The lower case p and q looked very similar (especially in Sans Serif fonts) and they were either positioned next to each other in the typecase or at opposite ends. If they were confused, the error only usually came to light when the page was proofed so you would need to mind your p's and q's or face a costly error!

From the invention of movable type up to the invention of hot metal typesetting, all printed text was essentially created by selecting sorts from a type case and assembling them line by line into a forme used to print a page.

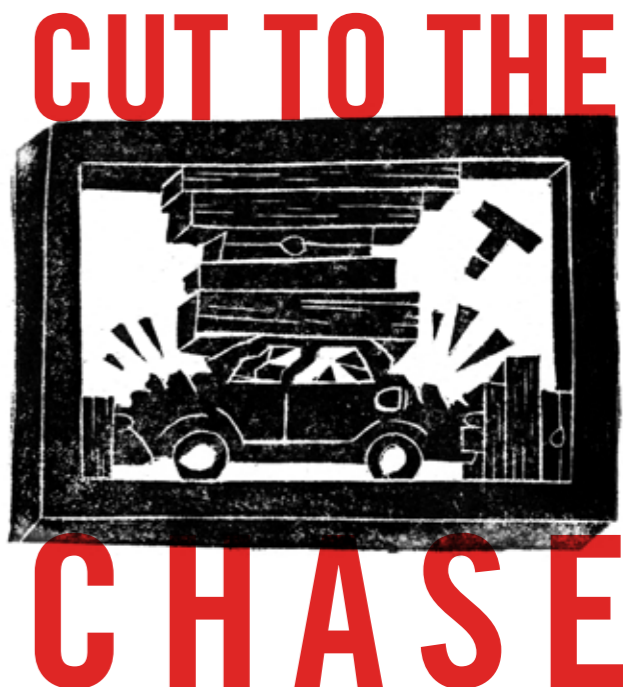
When the forme was no longer needed, all of the type had to be sorted back into the correct slots in the type case in a very time-consuming process called "distributing".

This sorting process led to the individual pieces being called sorts. Being 'out of sorts' was not just a nuisance, as many printers were paid according to the number of pages they could produce per day; being 'out of sorts' usually made them angry or bad-tempered.



This phrase pre-dates the movie chase scene and goes back to the traditions of typesetting. A line of lead and antimony type dies is known as the 'chase' and cutting the chase (to fit) was an everyday occurrence in the printing industry.

When set into a printing press, the chase could only be a certain length. If the line of type was too long it would not fit in the chase and would have to be cut down by removing words to shorten the chase so it would fit in the printing press. The chase would then be a shortened and highly edited version of the line of text. You can imagine the phrase being bandied around as remedy to some over-wordy piece of text and it's easy to see why it transferred to common parlance from there.



Creativity & Control

Words by **JAKE KENNEDY**

Photos by **JO HOUNSOME**



The countless inks produced by *Cranfield Colours* are pure, stand the test of time and come from a complex process stretching back generations. But how exactly are they made?

A visit to the Cranfield Inks headquarters is a cross between a school science lab and the Chocolate Factory that Charlie visited. Staff attend to simmering vats, colour is everywhere, and you are left aghast at the invention and alchemy going on in front of you. But for generations (instead of chocolate bars) this company has made inks for printers and painters. We all use inks in our work, but do we really know what they are, or how their formulas are achieved?

From the minute we were welcomed through the door into the factory of Cranfield Colours, it was clear that this small, family-run business was a vibrant affair. With a heritage in artisan ink making that stretches back to the 1920s, Cranfield create etching, litho, relief and letterpress inks for printmakers, along with their artists' oil paint range. Long gone are the dark days of studios with dangerous printing equipment and highly toxic inks. The invention of their Caligo safe wash inks have allowed printers to work to their best without the health concerns of old.

On our visit, director Michael Craine went to great lengths to describe the process behind his company's ink, from ingredients to the trial process – and we were surprised to learn from him that much of the output starts life in nature. “It's mainly a matter of three key stages in the ink's creation - Mix, Mill and Match - our three Ms. 90% of our printmaking inks are still based on reliable, beautiful and immensely flexible linseed oil, or flaxseed oil as it's sometimes known,” he explained. “This wonderful home-grown, versatile and sustainable crop continues its unassailable position as the foundation of all good oil-based printmaking inks.

“The remaining 10% is water-based, but all our formulations, whether the Caligo safe-wash ranges, our traditional historic formulations or the recent water-based relief inks, contain masses of vibrant pigment. Each colour chosen to provide a balanced palette and mixed, milled and matched to bring out their full character and tone. The pigments themselves can come either from natural sources, generally known as Earth Colours, or from the established European suppliers of the synthetic artists' organic pigments we need.”



“There are several ways to approach any challenge and there are multiple ways to formulate a colour. Where possible, we like to use single pigments rather than blends or hues, as they’re commonly known.”

MICHAEL CRAINE

Pigment is the key, it seems, to all ink. It’s the colour you see when you squeeze the tubes, the very foundation on which everything else is built. “In recent years, with advances in pigment technology, the choice of pigments has increased dramatically, however simply because a pigment is available doesn’t mean it will make a good ink,” Michael explains, adding: “The pigment itself may be unsuitable by virtue of poor light-fast credentials. It may be excessively transparent or far too opaque. There may be a lack of strength or the colour may change in the presence of reagents or atmospheric conditions. Aside from any technical misgivings, the new colour may simply not make a popular addition to a colour range. Customers may not want it.”

Purity, as you’d expect, is also a vital quality an ink needs. “The single pigment or ‘genuine’ formulation will often give a purity of colour that appears as a constant when viewed under various light sources. A poorly constructed blend is more prone to a shift in colour when viewed under these various light sources and is more likely to give a dirty result when used itself as part of a printmaker’s own blend,” Michael says. “There are several ways to approach any challenge and there are multiple ways to formulate a colour. Where possible, we like to use single pigments rather than blends or hues, as they’re commonly known.”

Depending on what kind of ink you favour, the manufacture differs – but only slightly. “It’s broadly similar for the different printmaking ranges. Each discipline - etching, relief, lithography and letterpress – all require different characteristics. The key differences between these ranges that we concentrate on are the viscosity (the reluctance to flow) and the tack or stickiness. Once we know what works best for the printmaker, it’s our job to ensure consistency batch after batch,” Michael says.

Another thing that is essential to keep consistent is the drying time of the ink. “We maintain that the slow drying of an oil-based formulation is best achieved by using a linseed oil that has a natural tendency to dry slowly,” Michael says. Then he gets as scientific as we ever experience on our visit – clearly a man of inky passion: “The alternative - that we disapprove of - is to artificially retard the drying by adding copious quantities

of hydrocarbon solvent to any old linseed oil. This was the method used for commercial inks - a weekly TV listings magazine has no need for archival properties. We believe the printmaker deserves far more, as do their customers. Such formulations based on commercial inks with a flick of this, a dash of that, a shake of fag ash and a glug of solvent are bad news in every sense - both in odour of the ink in the studio (the smell’s often pungent), the lack of print clarity and the questionable longevity of the finished print.”

The large mill machines in the factory are mesmerising. A large vat of coloured pigment and oil mix is tipped into the mill and the three rollers work together to iron out all of the lumps and bumps to create a beautiful glossy ink.

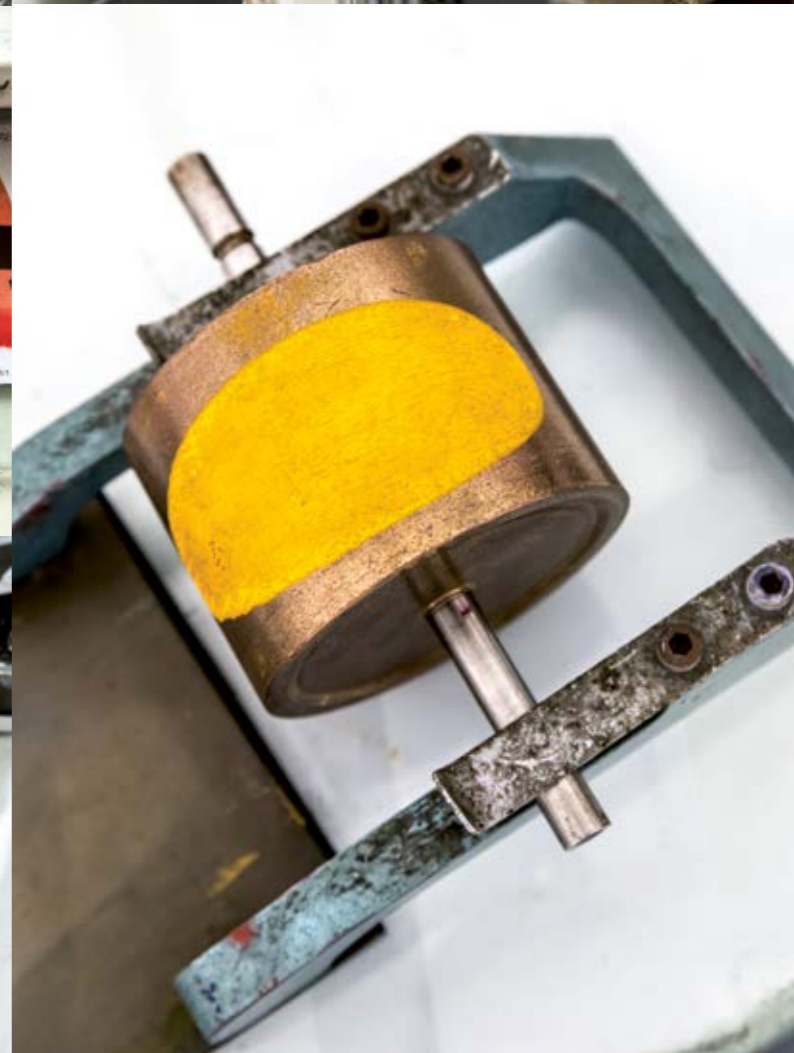
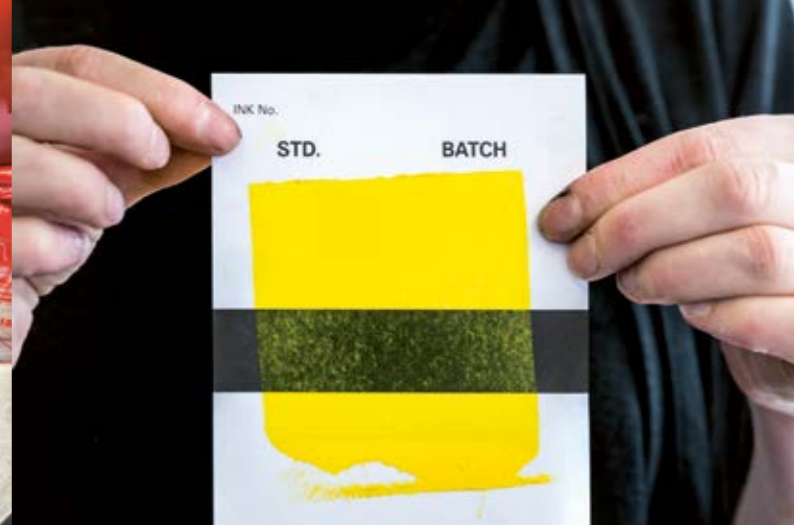
Elsewhere in the mixing area, it’s something like a crime scene (made more so for us as we watch it through CCTV), where the operators wear forensic-style overalls and every detail is managed. Everything is done by hand, with skilled workers at every post, using machinery to offer a constant product, not to cut corners in the production process.

Over the years, Michael says that despite being a fairly unwavering industry, there have been trends in the colours of inks he’s witnessed. “Because printmaking uses vast quantities of black, followed by earth colours and then the remainder of the palette, introducing new colours is not the gift of the ink maker, but it’s true sales of colours do reflect the changing trends. In the 1980s we manufactured larger quantities of umbers and sienna. Perhaps it was a time when, with the renewed interest in etching, printmakers were eager to tell the world that ‘we can still do it!’. The skills haven’t gone, we haven’t lost that link with the past. Now printmakers are more comfortable with bold colours and mixed media they feel less compulsion to impersonate or reflect the past,” he says.

Inks from Cranfield also go through rigorous testing before they ever make it to a printmaker’s inking roller. “It’s important to remember that inks have a pretty varied use once they leave our factory, they are adapted with products like extenders and used in very creative ways by printmakers and artists and our inks need to stand up to that ‘stretching’, so we work with a trusted band of retailers. As a consequence we owe a debt of thanks to two age-old partners - our links with Lawrence Art Supplies and Intaglio Printmakers go back to my father’s time, and both companies have provided a never ending team of willing testers who help us keep consistency of existing product and develop new lines. While we export considerably, the circle of testing and continuous improvement is predominantly achieved here in the UK.”

So, as we reluctantly hand back our lab coats and bid farewell to Michael and the team at Cranfield, we leave enlightened - it’s about so much more than colour – it’s about control and creativity too. **T**

www.cranfield-colours.co.uk



CHOP CHOP



'Cutting Boards' is an expansive (and international) project by Christopher Coltzeu, a 45-year-old woodcut artist, who lives with his wife, five kids and lots of chickens in the northern reaches of Germany.



A painter first and foremost, Christopher was looking for a new way of making art when his first child was born, "I first found myself working with print about 10 years ago. I have been a painter for many years, but after my first boy was born, I was searching for something that I could do around my family without poisoning them with serpentine and oil paint laying around. I realised pretty quickly that cutting wood and printing it was a fascinating process for me, so I focussed on that."

Given a chopping board by his wife when he ran out of wood to carve and print with, he had a lightbulb moment. What if I could just cut chopping boards? No-one else seemed to be doing it and after a few donations from friends and family, he decided to reach out internationally and see who was interested. There were plenty, from all corners of the globe, each with a unique tale from the sender.

But it's not all plain sailing Christopher explains. "Several chopping boards have been held up by German customs officers... They could not believe that that someone from overseas had paid a lot of postage to send an old used board to someone as a gift. I have had to open my packages several times in front of officers, especially packages that have come from the US. After the fifth time it happened, I asked the officer why they keep stopping the sent boards and he said 'it would be a clever way to smuggle drugs from US to Europe, declaring a large package as a gift of a chopping board'.

Having cut around 140 boards on both sides, the project is a pretty epic one by anyone's standards. Three years into what seems an ever expanding project, Christopher and his family live with the cutting boards day in, day out. But they're finding the boards have become a link to the wider world. "They are an everyday part of our life, but the project as a whole has given me a much more international mindset. A chopping board is used everywhere in the world for sharing and

cutting food and art is a great way to visualise this togetherness. When it comes down to it though, a crafted chopping board is the most basic piece of wood, so it's the perfect material to connect ideas and people".

A driven artist then, fitting his carving around not only his family, but a 20-hours-a-week factory job, enough to cover his monthly rent and allow him to work on his art. "I live for carving. When my kids are at the gym and I have to wait, I use the time for carving. Even when I have to wait at the dentist, I carve." So what does his wife really think about the project, is it taking over? "She loves it! My wife is always saying 'when you carve, you don't get on my nerves!'"

"I live for carving, when my kids are at the gym and I have to wait, I use the time for carving. Even when I have to wait at the dentist, I carve."

CHRISTOPHER COLTZEU

The Cutting Board Tribune is a perfect bed-fellow to the printed artwork and the boards themselves – a typed newsletter of sorts, telling the receiver the latest on the project and an opportunity for Christopher to connect with the community of donors and interested parties. "When I was writing the first letters to people asking them for a donation of a board, I sometimes put

in a print made from another board, to help them understand the idea of the project, without the need for words. I was so blown away by the fact that people from all kinds of locations around the world are sending me boards, I wanted to share this positivity through my hand-typed letters and notices. I am very happy to be creating positive news and sending it out internationally!"

If you want to send Christopher a chopping board or ask him more about the project, write to Christopher Coltzeu, PO Box 1220, 23807 Wahlstedt, Germany. His love of typed correspondence came through in his various letters and packages when working on this article. "Authenticity is a big word in everything I do. In a way, you are in touch with a printmaker when you receive a letter. You cannot click errors away like on a computer. A letter is real..." **T**

Making an impression

By Stephen Fowler

My interest in rubber stamps was sparked over 20 years ago, when I found an alphabet and numeral stamp set in an austere department store during an art school trip to Prague. These quickly became part of my illustration and print practice. Since writing my book on rubber stamping, friends have generously donated unusual rubber stamps to my ever-growing collection.

I like stamps as things in themselves, small reproduction tools to be held between thumb and forefinger. Packaging also holds an appeal whether a rudimentary sticker; the 'Early Stages Educational Division' sets, or the

beautifully illustrated boxes; 'Printograph', and 'Among the Eskimos', each appealing to a specific audience and usage.

Last summer as an artist in residence at the S. Helmes and W. Gaglione Rubber Stamp Archive in the Minnesota Centre for Book Arts, amongst the overwhelming collection of 70,000 stamps, I discovered a box of French educational 'buffer' sets from the 1950s. Like the rubber stamp map roller, they were the photocopyers of their time; a quick and economical way of reproducing handouts and the like.

Rubber stamps are an official form of visual language, they can instruct, pack a punch, validate and even make us smile. Because of this power they were often locked away. Rubber stamp artists and illustrators choose to either harness this, whether in mail art for example, or turn it on its head in the creation of surreal multi stamp print impressions. I also like to introduce my own hand carved stamps to the mix, and enjoy sharing the inclusivity of the form through my teaching. **T**



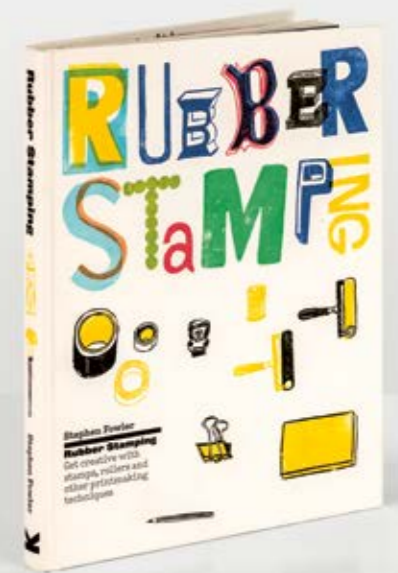


STEPHEN FOWLER is an artist and illustrator who loves to explore lo-fi DIY printmaking with both rubber stamps and roller printing.

He has recently returned from MABB – Malmö Artists' Book Biennial, where he shared his own unique stamp designs with others via his Passport Project – an inventive approach seeing him don an official uniform – designed to make you think about the use of stamps in both authority and as a means of communication and crossing borders.

His book *Rubber Stamping*, published by Laurence King, shows the joy and simplicity of stamp carving with over 40 inventive projects and step-by-step examples.

STEPHENFOWLER72.BLOGSPOT.CO.UK



Words by EMILY HARVEY Photos by JO CRAWFORD

Pulling the strings

Emily Harvey (aka The Curious Printmaker) shares her unique, elegant string printing technique and muses on its almost hypnotic results.



A brilliant way to create delicate organic forms with simple materials, these beautifully elegant mono prints will delight and surprise you time after time. It's one of those magic techniques that can absorb you for hours, the 'just one more' syndrome making it hard to stop.

It's easy to lose yourself in the process and working with the technique can become quite meditative, the flowing patterns affecting your mind and movements – you too begin to drift and flow with the rhythm of making. If you're after a calming activity that will focus your attention and uplift your spirits, these string prints are a great one to try.

It's also a great activity for children (be sure to use diluted paint instead of ink if they are very young) and groups of people of any age – I have run this activity with community mental health projects and in care homes for older people as well as at our local after school club.

One big plus is that it works better with more people involved, working on prints together – one (or more) to press down on the block and one to pull the string. It's a very sociable and co-operative activity.

Overleaf, I'll take you through this unique technique, creating a simple one-colour string print for this exercise, but there's no need to stop there. The great thing about printing with materials you have to hand is that you can keep experimenting. Here are a few ideas to get you going:

STRING PRINTS-PIRATION

Try different types of cord, string, thin ribbons, embroidery thread, etc.

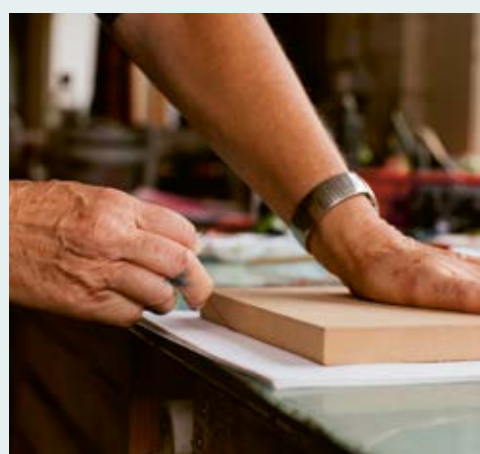
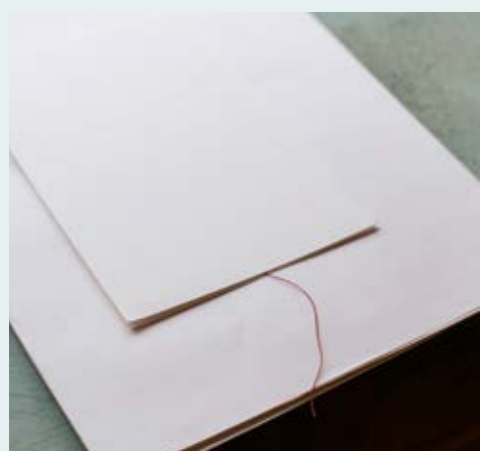
What happens when you try different textured papers or use damp paper?

Pull the thread straight out of the paper and the print will come to a point at the edge. Moving the string sideways as you pull it out makes very different pattern...

Dip sections of one length of thread in different colours to get colour blends

Overlapping prints in different colours and on coloured papers to build up more complex images

Add drawings or collage to your finished prints to build on your ideas



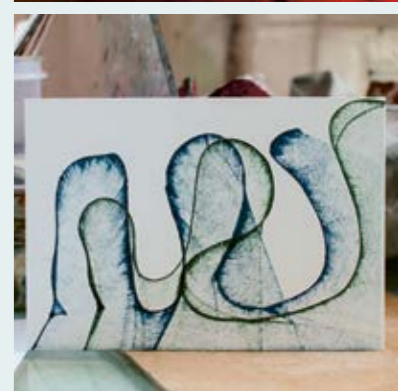
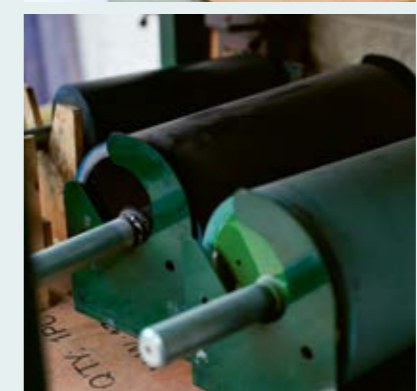
LET'S PRINT!

1. Pour a small amount of ink into a non-spill container
2. Cut a length of thread, around twice the length of the paper you are printing on
3. Use a paintbrush to push a length of thread into the ink, press the thread against the side of the pot with your brush as you pull it out to remove excess ink and avoid drips
4. Lay the inky thread in coils and waves on one of the pieces of paper, remembering to leave a tail hanging out
5. Place the second piece of paper on top, followed by the wooden block
6. Press down on the wooden block with the palm of your hand and pull the thread tail until all of the thread is out
7. Remove the wooden block and lift off your top sheet of paper to reveal your new prints. (Yes, you get two prints from one. Result!)

Emily Harvey has created a place to share and inspire curiosity about printmaking with her website *The Curious Printmaker*.

She hopes it will inspire you to experiment with printmaking, with a growing archive of activities and workshops for groups of all abilities. Thanks to Emily for sharing her dynamic string print workshop with us.

www.thecuriousprintmaker.co.uk



WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Strong thread • Ink or diluted paint • Paint pots and brushes • Two sheets of paper • Wooden block or piece of stiff card

Making

Paper

Words by JOHN COE

Photos by JO HOUNSOME



Nestled in the countryside, on the edge of the ancient city of Wells, a paper mill is quietly putting paper through its paces.

We visited *St Cuthberts Mill* and learnt about the lengths they go to in making sure *Somerset* is the Rolls Royce of papers for printmakers.



As you approach the imposing mill building, once known as 'the Buckingham Palace of paper mills', you can tell there's a hum to the place. It's in the machines that mould the papers, continuously whirring away, it's in the rush of the River Axe that feeds the mill and it's in the people who look after the machinery, check the papers and cut each sheet of their prestigious Somerset printmaking papers by hand.

Our guide for the day, Cathy Frood (marketing manager for the mill), explains that the mill has been making paper since the 1700s and it found its home here due to the pure waters of the River Axe. "Water is key to the production of paper, so you would find mills and factories situated alongside rivers – the purity of the water here is part of the unique make-up of our papers, and sustainability is something we monitor very closely." St Cuthberts is the last working mill on the River Axe, which is home to trout, kingfisher and herons amongst other wildlife. "The water around the mill carries the highest level of classification for cleanliness and biodiversity, with the mill returning clean water to the river having removed all solids and papermaking additives" Cathy says.

It's this harmony with nature and attention to detail that sets the tone for our whole tour around the mill. The printmaking community will know of its *Somerset* papers, however they also create a wide range of watercolour papers too – the printmaking papers made from cotton linters which are a by-product of the fashion industry and the watercolour papers use cotton linters or wood from sustainable sources. As Cathy explains, each of these papers are very different in their creation and their end use. "Our watercolour papers need to be able to take a huge amount of water and not break up, but I'd say that printmakers are a hugely experimental bunch in comparison – in our experience they love to push and pull our papers to the extreme, testing the limits with folding, embossing, wetting and re-wetting for intaglio printing and so on. As you can imagine, it's an almost impossible task to cover all uses, but we pride ourselves on creating highly archival specialist papers for all uses, so we love the challenge".

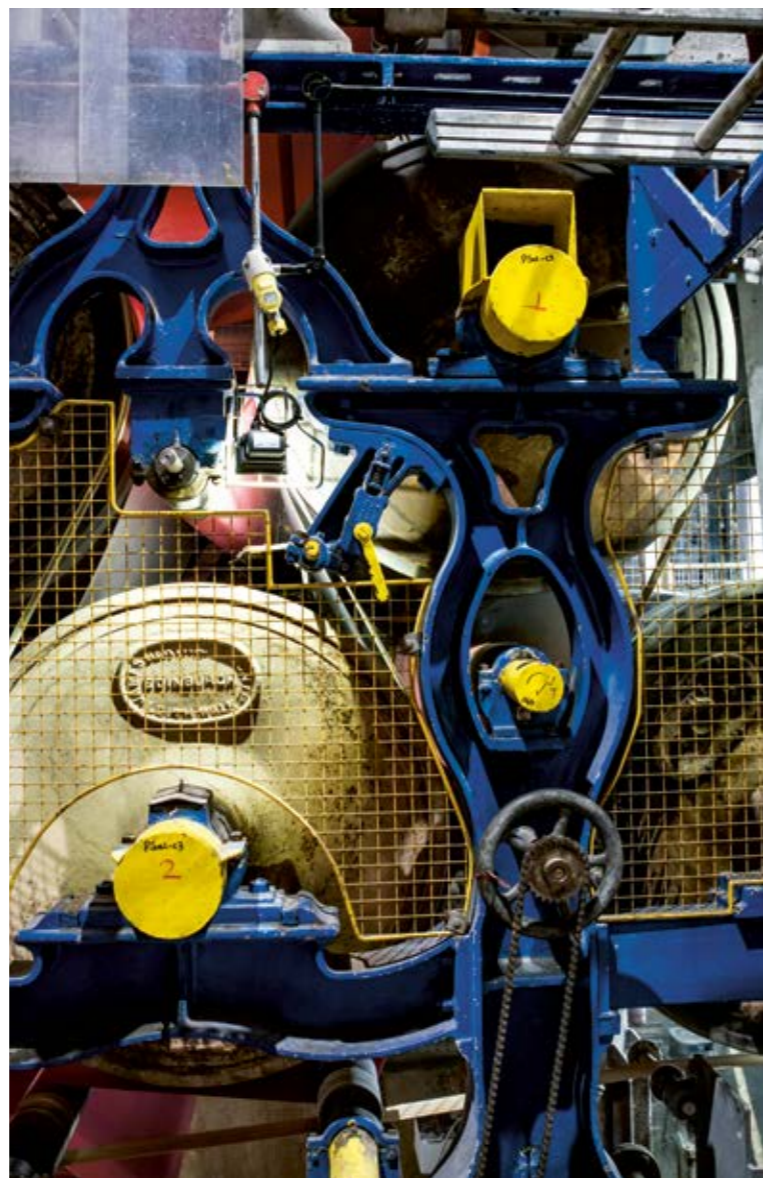
“Printmakers are an experimental bunch who love to push and pull our papers to the extreme, testing the limits.”

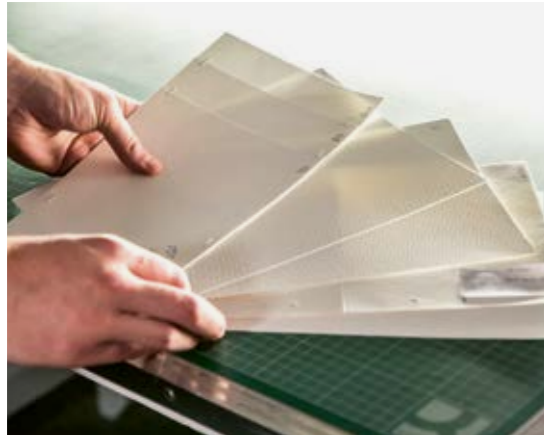
CATHY FROOD

With stocks ranging from a supple 115gsm to a weighty 500gsm, in a set of pure white and off-white tones, their Somerset papers have long been a hit with printmakers due to their durability and hand-finished sheets, giving the artwork of a print a real elegance and grandeur. But how is it made? As we walk between huge vats, the cotton rag is being mixed with the river water, pigment and a few secret ingredients to create the base element of each of their papers. We go deeper into the bowels of the factory, below ground level where the water flows naturally, and meet the rather formally named ‘PM2’.

“Mill owners are an imaginative bunch, so this lovely machine gets its name from it being the second machine installed in the mill – i.e. Paper Machine 2” Cathy explains. “She is one of the few remaining cylinder mould machines left in the world, so we take good care of her and she serves us all the better for it”.

Cathy goes on to explain the difference between ‘mould made’ papers and their fourdiner counterparts. “At St Cuthberts we use a cylinder mould machine with different covers for each watermark and a few special clients have their own moulds”. Pigments are used to create the shade for each type of paper to give a lightfast sheet. The quantity of pigments is tightly controlled to ensure the shade is correct. With papermaking it is all about getting the chemistry right. It was indeed the chemistry that went wrong five years ago when St Cuthberts Mill stopped making their Somerset Black sheet. As Cathy notes, “Our pigment supplier changed the formulation of their black pigment, which had disastrous consequences with its production, as the chemistry went awry”. Much lab work followed in the intervening years with Cathy commenting “I’m happy to say that we reformulated the black Somerset with new pigments, and we’re bringing it back! We’re very excited to see it being used by printmakers again soon”.





“It's so interesting to see what artists do with what we produce and it inspires us to keep making great papers.”

CATHY FROOD

As we walk alongside the epic machine, it's clear to see that it's as finely tweaked and tuned as an old platen press, just on a much larger scale. There is a small team of dedicated engineers on hand, listening to PM2's signature hum to make sure she's purring away, with the papermakers keeping an eye out for any inconsistencies in the larger roll of paper building up at the end of the machine. It's through looking closely at this machine that you understand the importance of both water and people in this highly mechanised process. “A run of our Somerset paper can take many hours to produce, using lots of water, so it's important we get the set-up right and work hard to make each batch of the papers as close to each other as possible. It's always a hive of activity down here when the machines are running, people busily checking on the paper, making sure the reels and drying sections are running as they should and so on,” Cathy notes.

The scale of the place is so large, cathedral-like almost, with its large rolls of papers stacked ready for inspection and then finishing. Put through its paces in the quality control room, it's tested for its durability, its absorbency, how it stacks up against previous batches and so on. “This is where we make sure each batch is as good as the last – bear in mind that our printmaking papers are used for relief printing, intaglio, letterpress, screenprinting and more, so it's important that we can proudly say it's a ‘tried and tested’ paper, that it will stand up to the most creative of uses” Cathy explains.

Once sections of the batch have been approved at QC, the roll is moved around on trolleys and winches to raise it up to the finishing room. This is where we get hands-on – Sally, who has been a hand-finisher for over 17 years, kindly pauses from her lunch break to give us the briefest of tutorials in how to hand-cut the sheets. Put simply she makes it look easy and our poor attempts are offered to us as souvenirs (we don't make the cut). Sally uses a plastic knife to gently separate the sheet from the roll (the cylinder mould also has a tear line – a thinner strip that allows each sheet to be cut more easily) and in no time at all slices her way through most of the roll. The large piles of sheets are then hand-counted and packaged up for distribution, with some sheets being stacked and bound into sketchbooks or kept aside for special orders from around the world.

There is an ongoing story of craft and excellence surrounding these papers, with people taking as much care over its production as we as printmakers do when we start printing and creating. Cathy sums it up: “We are proud to be part of the creative process of so many talented artists and printmakers – it's so interesting to see what they can do with what we produce and it inspires us to keep making great papers”. As we leave with our poorly cut sheets under our arms, we're just as excited to get making, to keep playing with paper. **T**

www.stcuthbertsmill.com



“I’m still sold on the quality of these tools, having used them for about two years already and they are still going strong.”

KAMINKA



My Tools

Kaminka



Everything I create starts with a pencil. Not just any pencil, but a HB2 Staedtler pencil, which has a specific hardness that I like. It’s always with me when I draw my first ideas into my sketchbook. I carry these things with me all the time as ideas for prints can come any time and I like to be prepared. One of my little quirks is that I like my pencil to always be sharp, so this tiny sharpener is also my permanent companion, along with a small rubber.

I visualise my thoughts with fast lines and keep sketching with these basic tools until I’m happy with a final layout. Sometimes I’ll use Fineliner for my final drawing, but more often than not I have all I need with paper and pencil.

I’m a big fan of ‘magic paper’ (carbon paper), which helps me to easily make a flipped version of my final drawing and transfer it onto the lino sheet. When I’m creating stamps for my prints, I’ll use softcut sheets – I find them softer, easier to carve and the material has got a longer lifespan.

Once I have my drawing on the block, it’s time for the use of my beloved carving tools from Pfeil. With different gouges, I carve and work out the details in my linocut. I’m still sold on the quality of these tools, having used them for about two years already and they are still going strong. They make such a difference to the beginner carving tools I used in my schooldays – to make good work, you need good tools!

After the block is cut, it’s time for my favourite part of the process – the printing. Finally you get to see your idea in that specific linocut aesthetic, something I’m loving exploring and experimenting with. For my postcards I use a special all-purpose stamping ink and for all other prints I use water-based printing inks. All predominantly in my favourite aqua blue colour. **T**

© kaminka.ahoi





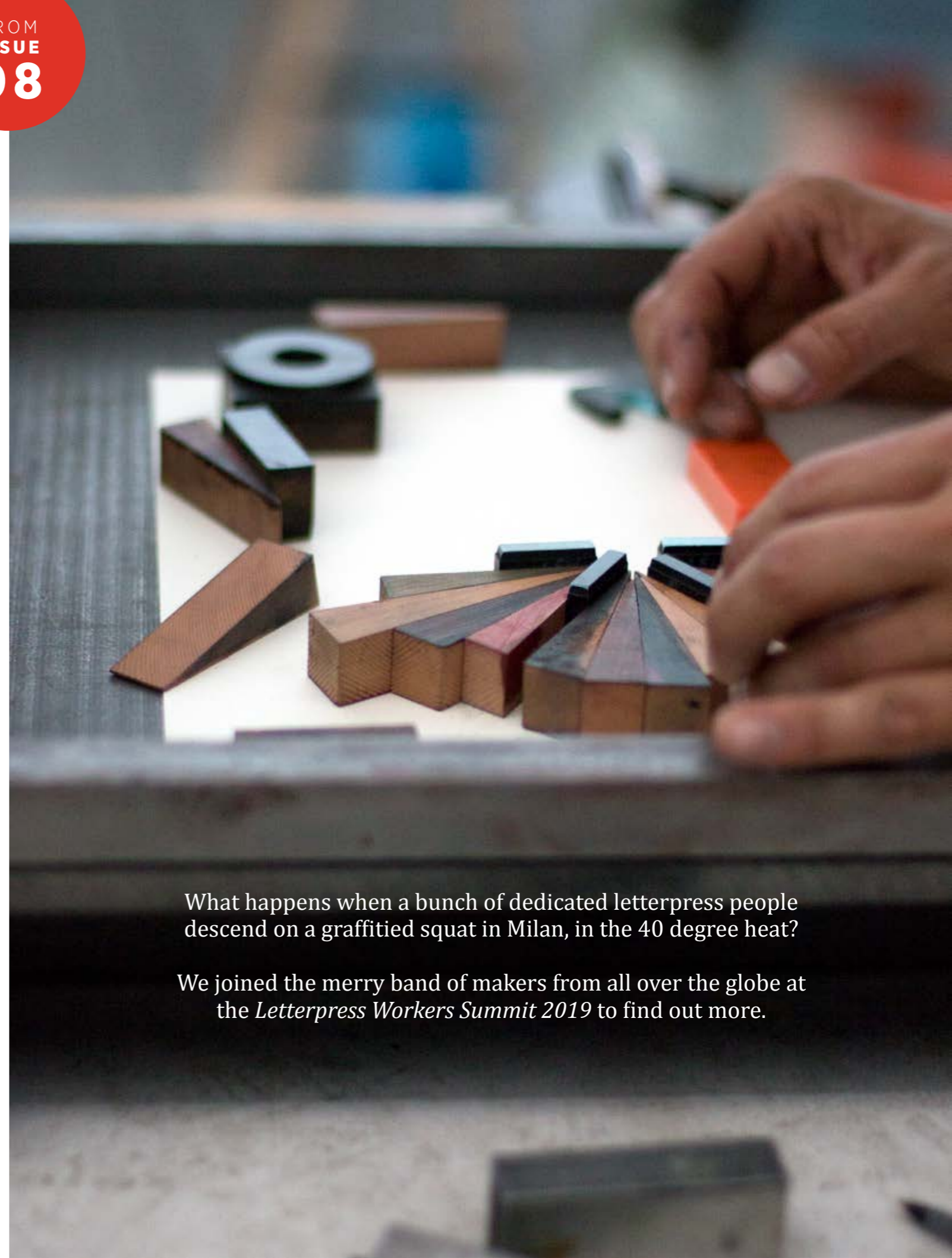
WARM



WELCOME

Words by **JOHN COE**

Photos by **ARMINA GHAZARYAN**



What happens when a bunch of dedicated letterpress people descend on a graffitied squat in Milan, in the 40 degree heat?

We joined the merry band of makers from all over the globe at the *Letterpress Workers Summit 2019* to find out more.



The Letterpress Workers Summit first came up in conversation with John Christopher (aka Flowers&Fluerons), who I'd met at a launch event for Pressing Matters and who'd attended a number of times – his enthusiasm for this yearly coming together of letterpress people was infectious. In the process of writing a short piece about the event, I also met Carl Middleton (aka Studio B), and pretty soon I'd visited (and printed at) his studio. I'm not sure I've ever laughed so much whilst printing and was looking for every opportunity to do so in the future – to keep that work/laugh balance at the right level.

When the invite for the 2019 summit hit my inbox I was apprehensive – I could count my experience printing with letterpress on one hand, and here I was considering working alongside letterpress veterans, all with many years' experience and exacting print work in their canon. Lucky for me, Carl was on hand to share stories from his numerous years of attending and was able to make me see this was the perfect printing trip. I could learn from the best, share ideas and come home with new friends and comrades.

He wasn't wrong. Another massive plus for me was that I'd already been in touch with some of the attendees (for features in the magazine), but not had a chance to meet them in person. And as I'm always looking for reasons to step away from the Mac and experience as much printing as possible, I booked my flights and started to look forward to the event.

The moment I stepped off the plane, I was hit by the unseasonable 40 degree heat Milan was subjected to at the time. On arrival at Leoncarvello – an imposing-looking graffitied community space that was to be our workplace for the next few days – I received an equally warm welcome from many familiar faces, all of whom were destined to become firm friends. The venue would also be host to a bike polo tournament, gigs and other impromptu events over the course of our stay. Organiser and long-term letterpress worker Claudio Madella made sure we were up to speed with the format of the event, and proved to be the beating heart of the summit, busying himself from morning till evening, making sure it ran smoothly – and that we were all drinking enough water!



© Marjin Kluijfhout

About the summit

The Letterpress Workers International Summit is an annual meeting of letterpress designers from around the globe. Attendees work together on a common theme, sharing their knowledge and experience. Started as an event, however with the increasing number of people attending, it has become a real community.

Established in 2012 by Officina Tipografica Novepunti, in the recent few years, with more people involved, it has been organised and run by the community itself. All the participants are encouraged to help and, if it is possible, to bring tools like presses, types, rollers and anything else that's needed.

Along with the prints made at the event, the letterpress workers are also encouraged to participate in a print exchange, with artwork created ahead of the event (this year on the theme of 'choice') which is assembled at the event and given out in a monoprinted box on the last day.

www.letterpressworkers.org



“I received an equally warm welcome from many familiar faces, all of whom were destined to become firm friends.”

JOHN COE





“All groups settled on their ideas quickly and were soon searching for type to lock up and proof.”

JOHN COE

With the proofing presses, the paper and the ink donated by local sources, it's truly a community event. However, as we met our fellow 'workers', it was clear that it's a global happening, with letterpress people descending from Japan, the US, the Netherlands, Spain, Russia, Estonia, Scotland, Brazil, Belgium, Germany, the UK, Poland and more. After initial introductions and a mooch around the space, it was time for a drink and a cool down and to share stories and experiences from the world of letterpress and beyond.

On the first day of printing, I was handed a worker's apron, a different colour for every year the event has been on, so an easy way to spot a newbie like me, or someone who's been involved from the start. With ten proofing presses, drawers of wood type and piles of paper, our names were drawn from a hat (literally) and we gathered into our groups of three to discuss ideas around this year's theme – *identity*.

As with previous themes (*borders, true of false and fear*) the starting point is there to make you think – to consider the word and the ideas it evokes – and to get a plan together for a print. Before the event, I'd wondered how this dynamic would work, but all groups seemed to settle on their ideas quickly and were soon searching for type to lock up and proof. It was amazing to see the wide variety of prints and ideas to come for the same theme, and even more interesting was seeing how the concepts developed as the days went on, from the literal to the abstract, the complex to the simple.

There was something anarchic *and* organised about the event – perhaps heightened by the location and the heat – like all the best prints, incorporating method and madness. It was an



ideal opportunity to run with an idea as a group, make work you wouldn't normally on your own – through working and printing together, we found connections as people too.

As Ben Beach (aka wrkshp33 – travel buddy and fellow newbie) reflected a couple of days into the event – “it's about the people, not the printing” – his summary of our creative journeys. We found ourselves getting into the rhythm of inking... drinking... inking... drinking (partly to stay hydrated, partly because they had a well-stocked bar) and





where some workers stopped due to the heat or finishing up, others – like Mike Ainsworth (North or Nowt) – could be found knocking out a second print idea, making the most of the set up and the ideas as they flowed.

The whole summit is open to the public, with a small shop selling letterpress wares and publications. Workshops were also on offer, with Stéphane de Schrevel and his swearing session (participants being asked to hurl abuse at each other in their native language and then set the expletives in wood type) at the large and loud end of the spectrum, and Myrna Keliher with her quieter writing workshop. In the evenings there were talks by some of the workers, a silent auction and a typography quiz. On the last evening, the now legendary ‘spirits night’ – a selection of strong booze was brought in by workers from their home town or country. As you can imagine, for some it got pretty messy.

I’d read before that the Letterpress Workers International Summit was as “an intoxicating mix of ink, type, adrenaline, creativity, friendship, cultural exchange and spirit”. And it’s that intent – to create a create a ‘physical network’ of makers – which feels truly unique to the event and all the more important in the modern day. We’re all now hugely connected via social media, but we rarely meet and share experiences or making-moments first-hand. Letterpress printmakers all share the same foundation blocks of knowledge around working with type, ink, creating compositions, which allows them to experiment, collaborate and stretch the technique during their time at the summit.

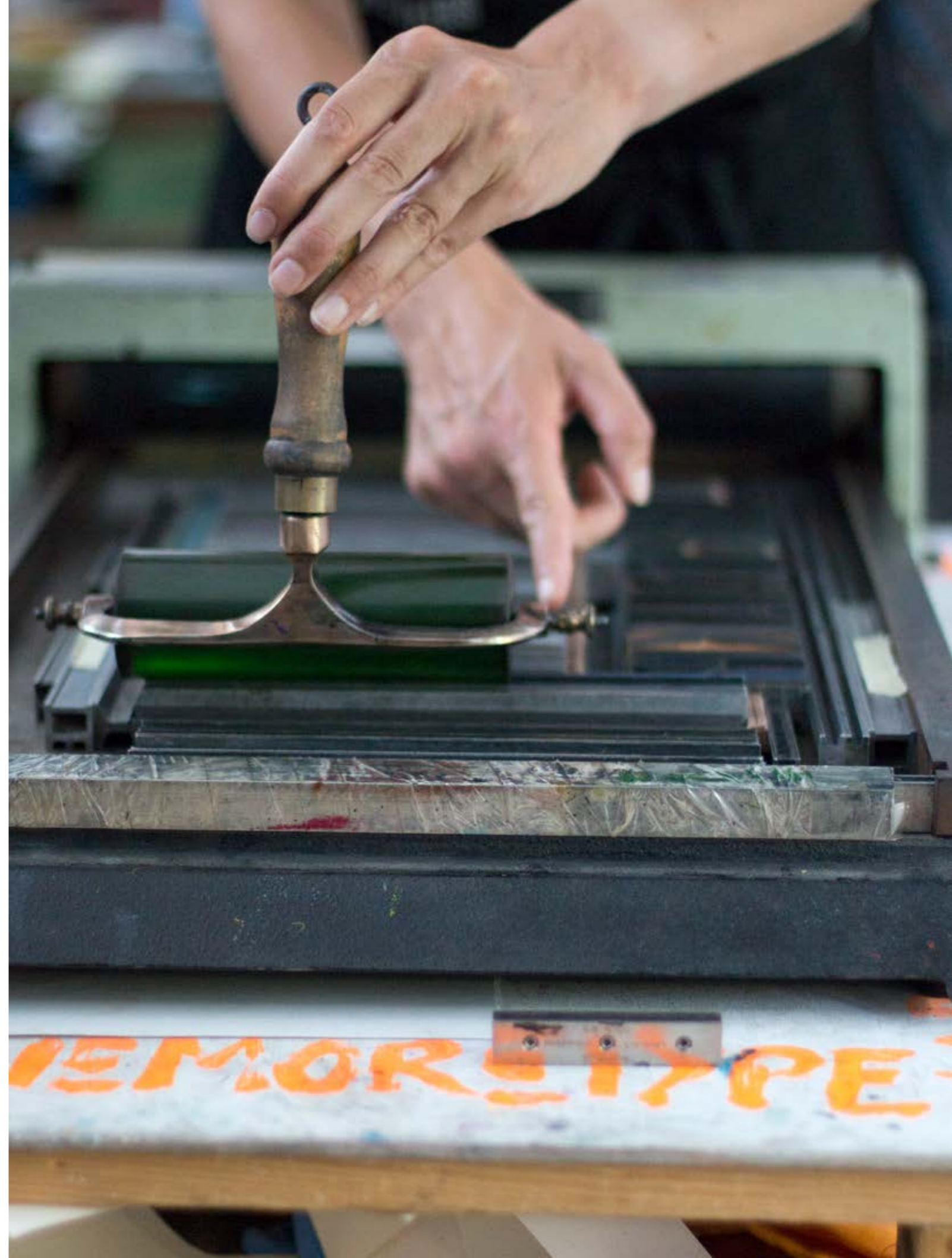
At its core, the idea was to make 50 or more prints of your group’s idea each day, with these collected and compiled on the final day for each worker to have a ‘set’. But in all honesty, we all left with so much more*... **T**

“The intent to create a create a ‘physical network’ of makers feels truly unique to the event.”

JOHN COE



**sunburn, hangovers and dehydration*



Words and photos courtesy of
FENNE KUSTERMANS

FROM
ISSUE
09

Letting It Unfold



Artist Fenne Kustermans shares her passion for making zines and how printmaking holds the key to her textural and tactile work.



I'd been working as a photographer for almost ten years but when it felt like something was missing from my life and work – I found myself back at school for a masters degree in Illustration and Graphic Design. It was a quick but scary decision, as I'd attempted the course at the same school ten years earlier and failed greatly, in every possible way – leaving me too scared to draw for years. Still, like a hungry hound, I could smell the possibilities of my holy grail hidden somewhere in those classes, protected by the old masters of the arts. Through trial and lots of errors, moments of despair and countless exciting experiments, it felt like I was getting closer and closer to my missing piece. Turns out, it wasn't so much about a specific technique, finding a style or the end result, but rather inviting art into my life, experiencing, creating and sharing stories.

Along the way, my love for analogue techniques grew. First there was paint, mostly acrylic, later when I found more ways to combine different techniques I added more and more printmaking. Every technique has its own vocabulary and so much can be told with lines and colours. It is the full experience of smells and sounds, working with your hands and also taking the time it takes to create an image that always feels like you enter a timeless space while working.

"I like the stories to be a part of my life, something I experience, feel or think about."



FENNE KUSTERMANS



I like the stories to be a part of my life, something I experience, feel or think about, and in this way they also change the course of my own life. The biggest example so far is without any doubt *62 dagen noord* (62 days north) where an experiment in solitude not only resulted in a book but also in actually moving north, but not in solitude. For *I Don't Like Mondays* I started a dialogue with school shooter Brenda Spencer and the zine design was a response to this. *The Rooftop* is about an unexpected love and the need for freedom. I'm currently finishing two zines and working on another book while continuing to learn from other artists. **T**



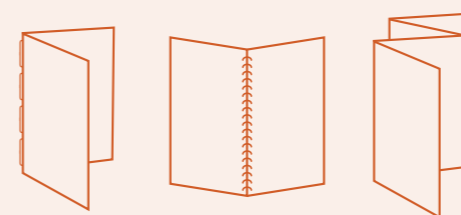
WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A3 paper for a A6 booklet • Knife, ruler and cutting mat • Your artwork. You can either print the illustrations or design on A3 paper before folding (to create multiples) or create the zine first and illustrate it later (for a one-of-a-kind). It's also possible to use other rectangle sizes of paper to create this folded zine, the end result is about 1/8 of the original paper size.



LET'S MAKE A ZINE!

1. Fold the paper in half lengthwise and press the fold to make it nice and sharp.
2. Fold in half the other way. Make sure the corners line up evenly.
3. Final fold in half vertically, the shorter edges of the paper will meet and the folded paper should be the size of a A6/ postcard.
4. Unfold the paper and lay it flat on a cutting mat. You can see that the paper is divided into eight sections by folds. Take a knife and make a horizontal cut through the two middle sections.
5. Fold again horizontally with the cut at the top, push the cut open into a diamond shape and then fold the paper into a booklet.



OTHER ZINE FORMATS:

- Center stapled • Saddle stitch • Sewn • Spiral •
- Digital publication • Leporello/concertina fold •
- Glued • Japanese binding •



Fenne Kustermans is a Belgian artist, currently living and working in Sweden. Her inspirations from nature, life and experiments find their way into her zines, graphic poems, illustrations and photographs.

Her work is influenced by both light and shadow, searching and being lost, the beauty of nature and the complex human mind.

www.fenne.be





HA!

ДЖОКЕР

조커

Words by JAKE KENNEDY Photos courtesy of CHAD DANIELEY

Printing The JOKER

The world of big budget marketing and old school typography collide in *Chad Danieleley's* recent work, with one commission making it on to big screens across the globe.

You'll have seen Chad Danieleley's prints if you went out of your house at all in 2019. His typography for *The Joker* film adorned everything from buses to billboards.

As is often the case with prints, after a world of brainstorming, it was the very first idea that Chad had that made the cut to be the 'logo' for the big budget Hollywood film. "Last March I was freelancing at Elastic/JAX Films on logos and storyboards for a couple of different shows and *The Joker* project came in. They needed help with pitching logos so I spent two days on the computer making a bunch in illustrator, but in the end it was the first one I did that's the logo you see today," he recalls.

The pace of the film industry will sound terrifying to any printers who idly consider their work's construction over weeks or months. "The film industry has no time to proof or choose anything. It's more like type cardio," Chad reveals. "So, I keep a Dropbox with 1800dpi scans of type samples at the ready for situations like this. For this particular proof sheet I'd quickly put all the wood type down, not caring what direction it was facing since it's always going to end up computerised. The K was backwards on that run so I flipped it and the gash just made sense, so I left it in. I've been told Todd Phillips said it was to stay exactly 'as is' and not be vectorised. When you have the director on your side, things go really smoothly..."

Chad also says the interface between analogue art and the digital world can yield results, although admits it's not for everyone. "There's a lot of stress when it comes to deadlines, but it's not much different than an X-ACTO knife, waxer and photocopier," he says. "I'm just trying to have fun and breathe life into my work, and for me that happens to be getting expressive with ink."


HA! HA!
HA! HA!

"When you have the director on your side, things go really smoothly."

CHAD DANIELEY

And lest there be any doubt of Chad's love of print, the artist has a vast press and type collection – a true devotee of print. "In 2013 I saw an ad for a Vandercook 325g and I figured it was time to make the leap and buy one. I had no idea how I was going to get it shipped from Seattle down to LA but Mark at the International Printing Museum in Carson helped set up the delivery and let me refurbish it before taking it to my Grandmother's garage. Then, after seeing some of Alan Kitching's prints, I decided I needed to get back into letterpress but this time I'd focus on wood. I'm drawn to the philosophy of Wabi-Sabi – I love getting a box of wood type – and even small blemishes are amplified when printed. I treat what I do more as monoprinting than traditional letterpress. I like to explore the 'what happens if' in my work. I treat my letterpress more as experiments in fine art." Chad is planning on producing a series of prints themed around *The Joker*, and hopes to exhibit in a gallery setting as well. **T**

ДЖОКЕР



All of our issues are available
now in digital (PDF) format and
issues 8 to 11 are still available in print.

We hope you enjoy this 'pick & mix' taster
from our first ten issues. Happy reading!

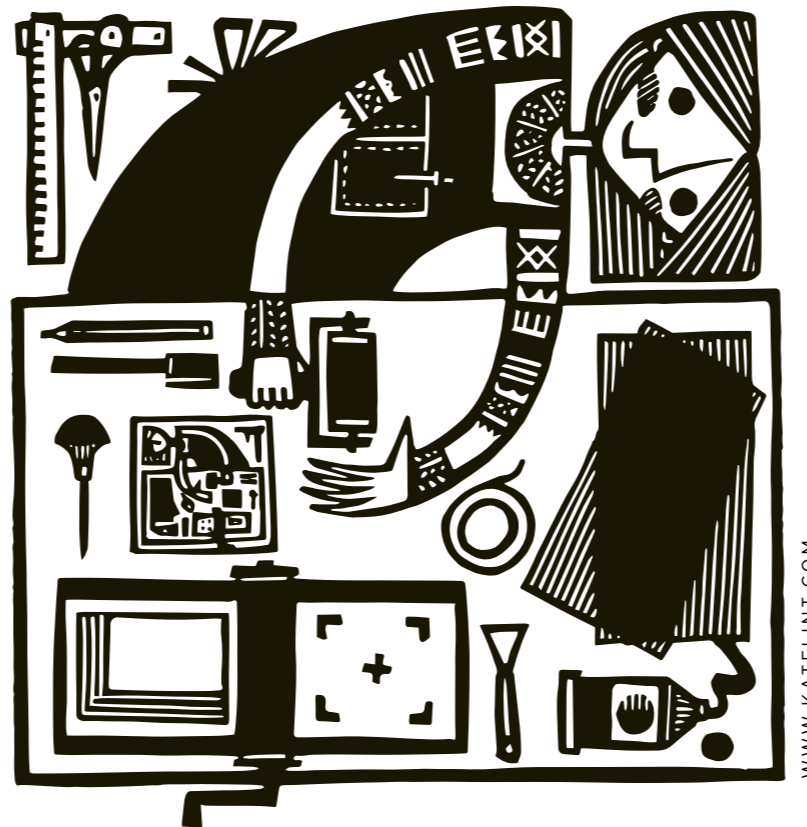
Visit www.pressingmattersmag.com/buy-mag
to explore the issues and order some inky
insight and printmaking goodness.

**pressing
matters**

CELEBRATING MODERN PRINTMAKING

pressing matters

CELEBRATING MODERN PRINTMAKING



HELLO@PRESSINGMATTERSMAG.COM

WWW.PRESSINGMATTERSMAG.COM

 PRESSINGMATTERSMAG