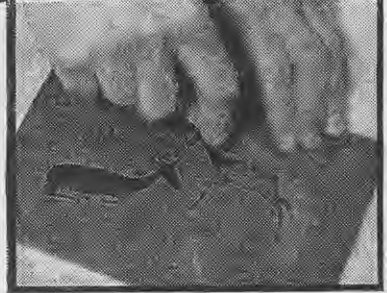


Above left—The reversed design is traced on to the block. Above right—The design has been transferred to the linoleum through the carbon paper. Lower right—The design is inked, the outline cut, and the uninked linoleum cut away.



White-line drawing: The subject is cut out in fine lines, making a fine drawing on a dark background.

Black-line drawing: Cutting away everything except the outline of the subject produces a line drawing on a white background.

A design can be varied by different treatments of the dark portions. Cutting fine lines or gouging small dots on to the solid surface varies the texture.

First step in cutting the block is to outline the design with the large V-shaped tool. Small areas around the lines are cut away with the small U-shaped gouge, then the big areas that are left are gouged out with the large U-shaped tool. The small V-shaped tool is used only for the finest lines.

The linoleum should be removed to a little more than half its depth. The block is weakened if the linoleum is cut away to the burlap backing.

At this stage taking a proof off the block (a process described in the next section) enables corrections to be made. Sometimes lines need gouging more deeply and edges straightening.

When the cut has been corrected and improved the linoleum can be glued firmly to a wooden block of the same size with carpenters' glue or linoleum glue. When the glue has been left to dry for at least 24 hours overlapping edges of linoleum are trimmed off with a sharp knife or chisel.

The Printing Process

The block is coated with ink, which adheres only to the pieces that are left uncut. The printing paper is placed on the block and pressure is exerted on it so that an ink impression of the design remains on the

paper when it is lifted. The block can then be inked again and the process repeated.

The ink can be either printers' ink, which is soluble in kerosene, or water-soluble linoleum ink; both are available in a variety of colours. The ink is applied to the block by a roller (included in most block-printing sets), or a dabber can be made from a stocking darning padded with cotton-wool and covered with chamois or suede leather. Applying the ink with a paint brush gives an attractive lined effect, and a stippled effect is achieved when it is applied with a sponge. The ink is spread out on a glass or metal slab, thinned if necessary, and spread with a spatula and then with the roller; only enough ink is used to give the slab an even coating. The roller should be run up and down and across the slide and then up and down and across the linoleum block to ensure even distribution of ink. The printing paper must be placed on the block in exactly the right place.

At this stage there are several ways of taking the print off. One is to place a wooden slab on top of the printing paper and hammer it evenly all over before removing slab and paper carefully. Another method is to cover the printing paper with two or three layers of thick cardboard and roll the surface with a rolling pin.

If the linoleum has not been mounted on a wooden block, prints can be taken by putting it through a clothes wringer. The tension is first loosened to allow both linoleum and paper to pass through it easily. This is a good way of taking off a proof of the cut, and it is a satisfactory method of printing many copies if care is taken.

After being printed the paper should be spread out until the ink is dry.



Ink is spread on a glass slide with a roller, which is then passed over the block.

Colour Printing

To print in more than one colour a separate block is needed for each colour. The design must be traced accurately on to the same number of blocks as there are colours in the design. The design must be fairly simple with the regions of colour well defined. With the original at hand, all the portions of the design that are one colour are inked in on the first block and the background cut away as before. The process is repeated for each colour, the blocks all being made exactly the same size so that the designs do not overlap in the printing.

The printing paper should be secured so that it cannot slip and the position at which the blocks are laid down should be marked. Each block is rolled with coloured ink as for one-colour printing. Starting with the lightest, each colour is printed on the paper and allowed to dry before the next colour is applied until the complete picture is built up. Three colours, such as yellow, red, and black, are printed in that order so that any overlapping shows as little as possible. Additional effects can be achieved by reversing this order, but these techniques are mostly acquired with practice and by experiment. Yellow on top of red, for instance, can achieve a gold-like glint.

Each colour must be dried thoroughly before the next can be printed, so the best technique after the initial experiment is to print as many as possible of one colour at a time.

Uses for Linoleum Blocks

Apart from the interest that linoleum-block printing provides as a creative art, this craft has many uses in the household. For example, it enables the printing of individual Christmas cards. Calendars and book-marks are attractive and personal presents when they have been printed by the giver.

A book-plate may be cut in linoleum, mounted on a block, and kept to stamp in all books; if organising the printing outfit every time a book needs its owner's signature is too much trouble, a large number may be printed at one time and stuck into books as they are required.

An attractive frieze for a child's room can be made by printing simple animal cut-outs on to a plain wall-paper. Small place cards for a children's party can be made attractive if they are decorated with brightly coloured linoleum-block prints.

Many other ideas will come to mind as skill in this craft increases.