

# Printmaking in the Netherlands

Maria Kapteijns MA, chair of Grafein, a foundation with a focus on contemporary printmaking.  
Courtesy of Ad Stijnman, Hans Laban, Leonie van Santvoort, Joyce Gabeler



The history of printmaking in the Netherlands roughly follows the same path as the rest of Western Europe, so we will leap through its history, without the illusion and the goal to be complete. We selected movements and artists that still have their influence on the work of artists today, trends that can still be recognized in contemporary art, and styles and features that we think were typically Dutch. During a long time in history Belgium (especially Flanders, the north of Belgium) and the Netherlands had a joint history.

Starting in the second half of the fifteenth century, we see the first known Netherlandish woodcuts, and the first known Netherlandish 'blockbooks', volumes of which text and images were cut out of the same woodblocks. Blockbooks developed in parallel to printing texts with movable metal type letters by press, a process invented by Johann Gutenberg (1395/1400–1468) in Mainz in the 1440s. Letterpress texts were printed in the Netherlands from 1470 onwards, in line with developments in neighbouring countries <sup>1</sup>.

The first Dutch intaglio prints date from the last quarter of the 15th century, and the first etchings were made by Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533) in 1520. Etching iron intaglio printing plates was used in Germany from c.1495, but developments halted c.1540, because iron was too hard to engrave with a burin and because iron plates did rust. Copper plates had the advantage that they could both be engraved and etched, and they did not rust <sup>2</sup>.



Mary with child, anonymus, 1480-1490, woodcut, Rijksmuseum RP-P-1999-91



Hendrik Goltzius De triomf van Galatea, 1592, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-10.408

## Reproduction and spreading

In the 16th century copper and wood engraving, and etching were used for reproduction on a large scale. The most talented engravers from the Low Countries were employed and educated in workshops, mainly in Antwerp (now Belgium), which was a major centre of print shops and a place of cultural exchange. Large numbers of high quality prints were sold all over Europe and contributed to the spreading of images<sup>3</sup>. Here the Netherlands stand out: high quality Dutch and Flemish prints were distributed all over Europe, playing a role in the international exchange of visual language. In that time printing often involved reproduction of existing paintings, prints, details of prints, figures, etc. It was a common thing to do. When Antwerp, after a siege, surrendered to Spain in 1585, the focus shifted to Amsterdam, the new centre of cultural exchange.

## Material expression

In the Netherlands itself an Italian influenced style was popular in the 16th century. It can be spotted in the used visual language as well as in the fact that mythological scenes enter the Dutch art, for example Hendrik Goltzius' *The triumph of Galatea*. Goltzius used a new style of drawing, using the burin as a calligraphic tool, making lines that swell and taper, to enhance the material expression of his designs <sup>4</sup>.

1. Swillens, P.T.A., *Prentkunst in de Nederlanden tot 1800*. Utrecht: het Spectrum, 1944. P. 21-26

2. Stijnman, A. *A History of Engraving and Etching Techniques, Developments of Manual Intaglio Printmaking Processes, 1400-2000*. Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2012; the original dissertation text is available via <http://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.378167>. P. 53 in the download

3. Beheydt, L. (2020-07-10). <https://www.the-low-countries.com/article/netherlandish-printmaking-was-renowned-from-italy-to-russia>

4. Van Mander, K., 1604 *Schilder-Boeck*, p 286

Lucas van Leyden (1494- 1533 ) was a special talent, only equaled in his time by the famous German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). His prints astonished contemporaries because of their miraculous material expression. Most of his prints have religious themes, but this *Melkmeisje* (Milkmaid), seems to point forward to times and subjects to come.

### The Dutch Golden Age

The 17th century was special for the Netherlands, called our Golden Age, in which trade, science and cultural life were flourishing. Jewish immigrants from Portugal and Spain, and Protestants from Flanders, had arrived in large numbers. Among them were intellectuals, refined aristocrats, and skilled artists, all adding to the diversity and the intellectual debate in the Netherlands. A very open cultural climate arose.

### Experiments in the 17th and early 18th century

This climate attracted even more artists from abroad; techniques and ideas were exchanged, and the Netherlands became a breeding ground for new techniques and experiments. Printmaking changed and those changes disseminated, printers came to Holland, picked up new techniques and Dutch printmakers immigrated to e.g. London for furthering their career.

Since the Netherlands were a nation of merchants and a well-to-do middle class, there was a market for art depicting daily life, landscapes, the sea. Most 17th century printmakers were painters that also made etchings. They started making etchings instead of engravings, because this allowed drawing more loosely. Moreover, etching needed little special education and engraving took years of practice. A part of the artists were driven by their own inspiration rather than copying, e.g.. drawing daily situations, or searching for a particular atmosphere.

It was the age of Rembrandt (1606-1669), whose paintings are in museums all over the world. Less visible is the large number of etchings Rembrandt made, in a very loose and sketchy way, often adding dry point, achieving a very expressive atmosphere. This free way of working was already influential during his lifetime, but it also made him an inspiration for French impressionists 200 year later - since his work could be seen in the Louvre by then<sup>5</sup>. And Rembrandt was not the only one. Other 17th century Dutch artists had an eye for scenes of daily life and common people, some were specialized in livestock. The subject matter, depicted in realistic detail, attracted the interest of many other artists throughout Europe.

**Hercules Segers** (1589/90–1633/40) has been an inspiration for Rembrandt, and it is known that the latter had some works of Segers in his possession. Segers' graphic works show a remarkable experimental way of working. He experimented with etching techniques and materials, including colour printing, and developed a special line process, using self-invented methods. Above that every print is unique, printed in different colours in a time that colour printing was not common in the Netherlands. Sometimes he coloured the paper or textile the plates were printed on in advance. He continued with dry point, and cut out his prints. His prints often depict mysterious rocky landscapes (which we don't have in the Netherlands) and mossy



Lucas van Leyden ,1510, Milkmaid, engraving.  
Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-1748



Rembrandt, selfportrait with Saskia, 1636,  
Rijksmuseum RP-P-1961-988



Adriaen van Velde, 1828-1830, Lying goat, etching,  
Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-15.736



Hercules Segers, c. 1622 - c. 1625 , Distant View with a Road and Mossy Branches, line etching, printed in dark blue on cotton prepared with a yellowish-grey, lead-based ground, coloured with paint in alternating sections, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-810

5. Rembrandthuis, 2018. [www.rembrandthuis.nl/nl/actueel/archief/rembrandt-in-parijs](http://www.rembrandthuis.nl/nl/actueel/archief/rembrandt-in-parijs)





Hercules Segers, 1625-1630, mossed tree, etching with lift-ground technique. Rijksmuseum RP-P-H-OB-847

trees. Hercules Segers invented a forerunner of the lift-ground process <sup>6</sup> : the moss-covered tree is made with this lift-ground technique and printed in green ink on pale pink and blue-prepared paper.<sup>7</sup>

**Mezzotint** was also invented in Holland, by Ludwig von Siegen, a German military office and amateur engraver while residing in Amsterdam in 1642. A few artists followed, Abraham Blooteling (1640-1690) was the first 'professional'. It was labour intensive and only a few hundred impressions could be pulled from a plate, compared to 2,000 from an engraved plate. Most mezzotints (*zwarte kunst* aka black manner) were portraits for the elite<sup>8</sup>. A nice exception from the works by Cornelis Dusart (1660?-1704) and Jacob Gole (1660-1724), who created series of mezzotints, depicting the five senses, or the months of the year. Mezzotint didn't have many followers in the Netherlands, to get popular in England after 1750, also mainly for posh portraits<sup>9</sup>. Nowadays it is widely spread and skilfully practiced in other parts of the world, e.g. Japan.

### Aquatint

Jan van de Velde IV has to be mentioned here, as one of those experimenting artists who invented new techniques, drawing on the flourishing cultural scene. Van de Velde used a diversity of techniques, to achieve tonal effects: line etching, stipple technique and the roulette combined with scraping. He was the first to use dust-grain aquatint, between 1650 and 1680. He never spread this information, so at that time it has not been the starting point of a wider use of this technique<sup>10</sup>.



Cornelis Dusart, between 1670 and 1704, The sight, about the five senses, mezzotint and engraving. Rijksmuseum RP-P-1906-3107

### Colour printing

From c.1685 the studio of Johannes Teyler (1648-1709?) produced the first Dutch multi-coloured intaglio prints, line etchings and engravings, inked *à la poupée* in up to ten different colours. *À la poupée* is an inking method for intaglio: for every colour separately a ball shaped wad of cloth is used to apply the ink so in one run different colours can be printed. The process disseminated all over Europe and is still in use.

In 1702 the German painter Jacob Christoff Le Blon (1667-1741) arrived in Amsterdam. In the decade that followed he experimented with colours and developed a tri-chromatic printing system. He over-printed in register three mezzotint plates, inked in respectively blue, yellow and red, essentially developing the concept of the present CMYK colour system used in offset and digital printing<sup>11</sup>.

Not all inventors were Dutch from origin or stayed in Holland for the rest of their life, but the cultural climate in the Netherlands seems to have been a fantastic boost for experiments, new inventions, and refreshing ideas.

6. Stijnman, A. (2012). A History of Engraving and Etching Techniques, Developments of Manual Intaglio Printmaking Processes, 1400-2000. Universiteit van Amsterdam; the original dissertation text is available via <http://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.378167> p 175 in de pdf

7. H. Leeflang, (2016), 'Hercules Segers, The Mossy Tree [HB 32], Amsterdam, c. 1625 - c. 1630', in J. Turner (ed.), Works by Hercules Segers in the Rijksmuseum, online coll. cat. Amsterdam: [hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.37287](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.37287) (accessed 2022-04-12).

8. Blom van der, A. (1978), Teken en dat het gedrukt staat, 500 jaar grafiek in Nederland. Utrecht: Cosmos.

9. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2018, May 29). mezzotint. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/technology/mezzotint> (accessed 2022-04-14).

10. Stijnman, A. (2012) P. 174 in the download

11. Stijnman, A., Ink and light – le Blon's Coloritto and Newton's Opticks, (2018-03-19) via <https://www.thinking3d.ac.uk/LeBlon1725/> (accessed 2022-04-12)



## The Dutch landscape

The Netherlands is essentially a river delta, lying partially underneath sea level. It is a flat land that is kept dry artificially. This makes the role of rivers and the sea visible, and the flat landscape guarantees wide views and often cloudy skies with a special kind of light. This, combined with the good market for art, might be an explanation for the early and rather unique rise of landscapes as a respected genre in art in The Netherlands, as early as the 17th century<sup>12</sup>. The Dutch like(d) landscapes for what they are, not necessarily symbolically, not referring to myths or as a background for a story, but for the landscape itself<sup>13</sup>. During the 17th century the horizon on paintings, drawings and etchings was lowered, so more and more of the sky became visible, the light in the clouds played a larger role, the composition changed.<sup>14</sup>

Beside the flat and wet Dutch polder landscape, the Italian, arcadian, or fantasized scenery, that had been highly popular until the 1630's, kept its appeal during a large part of the 17th century. So mountains and waterfalls might appear in the Dutch 17th century printed landscapes as well.



Rembrandt, 1650, landscape with fisherman. Etching with dry point, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-445

Dutch printers nowadays are still fascinated by the flat landscape and the effects the water has on our land. Different techniques can be used, the attraction and the atmosphere still can be the same.

Siemen Dijkstra's print is made in a traditional technique: colour woodcut. Inge van den Thillart uses photopolymer, toyobo plates.



Siemen Dijkstra, 2017 .Winterwad, woodprint 25 x 80 cm



Inge van den Thillart, aan de Waal, toyobo

## 18th century

In the second half of the 18th century the Dutch Republic had lost its importance internationally and the cultural landscape had changed. More and more the market was defined by patricians, bankers, landlords, and merchants who had grown wealthy and had started collecting drawings and prints. Since this elite was really proud of their ancestry, a market for heroic prints came up, depicting

12. Kiers, J. & Tissink, F. (2000). De Glorie van de Gouden Eeuw. Zwolle: Uitgeverij Waanders, p 221-230

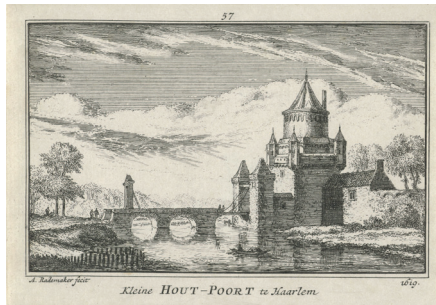
13. Gombrich, E.H. (1988, 3e druk), Eeuwige Schoonheid. Weesp: Uitgeverij De Haan, p 313

14. Kiers, J. & Tissink, F. (2000). p 37



Dutch historical events, royal weddings and funerals, and naval battles. Until then historic images depicted biblical times or antiquity.<sup>15</sup> A large number of graphic artists in the 18th century produced so called topographic prints, depicting villages, little cities and farming land. This might partially be inspired by the same sentiment and nationalist pride, partially it corresponds with the international tendency to shift to real-life landscapes<sup>16</sup>. Etching and engraving became a specialization.

At the end of the 18th century the depicted farmhouses and landscapes changed, became less raked, the trees became less straight. During the romantic period the past became even more idealized, so the number of Dutch artists that were fascinated by the 17th century art, increased. They copied the works of the masters (especially Rembrandt was popular), and also went outside to draw landscapes and livestock to their own perception.



Abraham Rademaker, 18th century topographic print, depicting a gate in Haarlem, but as it looked in 1619, made in 1727-1733, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-73.410

### Changing times

After the 17th century with its highly valued role for art, and the accessibility to it for a relative large part of the urban population, the 18th century seems less sparkling. At the end of the century a social revolution would take place. The Netherlands had come under the rule of France, to be reigned by Napoleons brother, Lodewijk Napoleon, who was crowned king in 1806. Influenced and inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution, the Dutch aristocrats had lost power, and middleclass people demanded equal rights for all. This also had its effect on the world of art. Until that time art had been collected by wealthy people, so art policy in a way was a matter of private initiatives. The overall opinion was that the 18th century Dutch art could not reach the level of 17th century art, and that of other European countries, and something had to be done.<sup>17</sup> In 1798 it was decided to make it a state matter and at the same

time increase the access to art.<sup>18</sup> The collection of Stadtholder Willem V was confiscated (in 1798) and a large collection was acquired in 1807 by Lodewijk Napoleon and together this became the start of the forerunner of the 'Rijksprentenkabinet', the state collection of prints. Art exhibitions were organized, showing 17th century art as well as contemporary works and a Royal Art Academy was founded in Amsterdam. After the French occupation the existing, struggling art academy in The Hague was supported by the recently crowned Dutch king, Willem I, in the early decades of the century. The French rule had not done much good for the Dutch economy so it took some time before a new market for art was developed.

### Mass production and reaction

In the 19th century mass production of texts and images became possible in Europe, illustrated magazines became popular, in the Netherlands as well. All those new techniques guaranteeing high quality prints and illustrations in large editions like wood engraving, lithography, steel engraving, photomechanical techniques. Wood engraving in the Netherlands could not compete very well with foreign engravers and even prominent engravers like Van Arum, who had been director of the only Dutch engraving school struggled with his career. Lithography on the other hand, being strongly supported by King Willem I, thrived in the Netherlands, for commercial printing (packaging, labels), but also reproductions of famous paintings. The latter inspired artists to increase their reputation by illustrating magazines.<sup>19</sup>



Van Troostwijk, 1818, Cows at a willow  
Rijksmuseum RP-P-1886-A-10779

12. Kiers, J. & Tissink, F. (2000). De Glorie van de Gouden Eeuw. Zwolle: Uitgeverij Waanders, p 221-230

13. Gombrich, E.H. (1988, 3e druk), Eeuwige Schoonheid. Weesp: Uitgeverij De Haan, p 313

14. Kiers, J. & Tissink, F. (2000). p 37

15. Blom van der, A., (1978) .Teken en dat het gedrukt staat , 500 jaar grafiek in Nederland. Utrecht: Cosmos. p 52

16. Stefaan Hautekeete, (2014) . <https://www.codart.nl/feature/curators-project/a-cabinet-of-the-most-delightful-drawings/>

17. De Wit, T., De Kunstkronijk over de eigentijdse kunst. Utrecht: Universiteit van Utrecht via <https://studenttheses.uu.nl> 2012.

18. Van der Blom, p 66

19. Lintsen, H.W.(1993). Geschiedenis van de techniek in Nederland. De wording van een moderne samenleving 1800-1890. Zutphen: Walburg Pers. p. 254-271



### Original prints as original art form

As a reaction to the mass production of prints repeatedly associations and foundations were founded. The goal often was the promotion of printmaking as an original art form and the revaluation of printmaking as craftsmanship. Often some kind of idealism went with it, often linked to emancipatory movements. We name a few, starting with the early ones in The Hague.

In The Hague, around 1850 a group of artists gathered in the studio of Lambertus Hardenberg (1822-1900), once a week, to make etchings, the *Haagsche Etsclub*, aka etching society of The Hague. They made work in small editions, for exchange with each other and a small public, and were inspired by the Romanticism and Realism. The interest in ordinary people as a subject had risen, inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution<sup>20</sup>. In 1847 Hardenberg was one of the founders of Pulchri Studio, an artist society that still exists in The Hague.<sup>21</sup>

In 1885 the *Nederlandsche Etsclub* was founded, a society with the goal to promote original prints as one of the visual arts, not just for illustration or reproduction. With graphic art portfolio's, the members managed to draw attention for original graphics. The society wasn't restricted to etching, for example lithography had a place in the portfolio's as well. Respected artists joined in and Symbolism as an art movement was spread and acquired a public via these portfolio's. Jan Toorop became renown as an artist through these portfolio's. The turn of the century was a time of ideals, a number of artist societies started, along with anarchist artist and pacifist movements<sup>22</sup>.

In Toorops works the international art nouveau can be recognized. The Dutch variation of it is called *Slaoliestijl*, salad oil style, after the advertising poster Toorop made for the Delft salad oil company. Handcrafted prints were appreciated in this movement, so this new art got separated from the more standard illustrations, where photographic techniques were embraced. It even led to the reintroduction of woodcuts<sup>23</sup>.

In 1918, *De Ploeg* was founded in Groningen by artists that were not satisfied with the opportunities to make exhibitions and develop themselves. Although all kind of artists could join, *De Ploeg* earned fame with a specific style of work in the 1920s, that was connected to the international expressionism as well as to the region of Groningen. Inspired by German Expressionists such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938), members of *de Ploeg* experimented with materials and made expressionist etchings and woodcuts.<sup>24</sup>

One of the members was Hendrik Werkman (1882 – 1945), owner of a printshop. At the end of the Second World War Werkman was killed, probably because of printing illegal texts and hiding Jewish people. By then he had produced a large print oeuvre using the inventory of his printshop, using letters, ink rollers, stamps, making stencils and other experimental matter.

### De Luis and artists run open studios for printmaking

In 1960, a group of printmaking artists in the town of Utrecht, decided to cooperate to promote contemporary graphic arts, which – again - they perceived as undervalued. They were all individualist, independent artists, calling themselves



Lambertus Hardenberg, Girl with water jug, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-55.566  
Founder and co-founder of the Haagsche Etsclub and Pulchri Studio



Jan Toorop, 1894. Poster for Delft salad oil, Rijksmuseum RP-P-



Hendrik Werkman, 1944. Compositie met figuren, RP-P-2020-134

20. Desjardijn, D., (1985). *Grafiek in Nederland*. Amsterdam: Stachelswine Publishers. P 19

21. Museum Helmond, Editors of Museum Helmond. Lambertus Hardenberg. [museumhelmond.nl/collectie/vervaardiger/Lambertus+Hardenberg](https://museumhelmond.nl/collectie/vervaardiger/Lambertus+Hardenberg) (accessed 2022-05-10)

22. Imanse, G and Steen, J. (1978) *Achtergronden van het Symbolisme* (accessed via DBNL)

23. Blom van der, Ad, 1978, *Tekenen dat het gedrukt staat, 500 jaar grafiek in Nederland*. Utrecht: Kosmos. P 135

24. Verhoog, L. (2018-08-13). *Zo experimenteerde kunstenaarsvereniging de Ploeg met grafiek*. Kunstpunt Groningen.



*De Luis* aka The Louse. One of the founders was Moesman, a famous surrealist artist – one of the few in The Netherlands. *De Luis* issued boxes of prints, organized exhibitions and facilitated an artist run open studio for printmaking, the first in a row of open studios in the Netherlands <sup>25</sup>.

In the Netherlands most artists print their own work. Printing by master printers is not common. Since printing equipment (e.g. presses) is expensive to buy, a large number of artists make use of public studios or workshops, most of them being founded about 40 years ago. These workshops have etching equipment and presses, lithographic stones and presses, all kind of materials needed for printmaking. They are well equipped and available for the professional printing artist. This situation has influenced the face of printmaking in the Netherlands. People print their own work, so large editions are seldom printed, the studios are places where experience is shared, experiments take place and networks grow, so there might be other dynamics. Most of contemporary handprinted books to be mentioned further on, are all printed in these workshops, where collaborations are realised.

Repeatedly art printmakers in the Netherlands have felt the urge to organize themselves, and to redefine printmaking. This leads to collaborations, and often to a revaluation of certain types of printmaking, which in his turn often has an influence the face of printmaking. Today again we can recognize this.

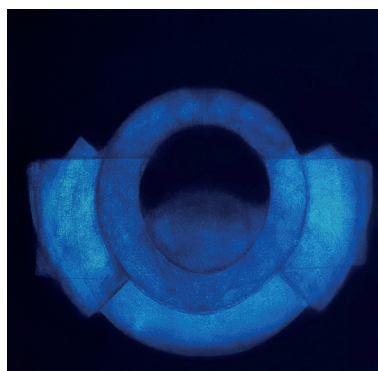
### Handicraft and traditional techniques

In contemporary printmaking earlier techniques have

gained the interest of some artists. Blueprints and gum bichromate method, an early stage photography method, nature printing in which natural objects such as leaves or feathers are inked and printed. Upcoming is the use of inks based on vegetable colourants. The latter is in line with another (global) trend: the search for ecofriendly and sustainable techniques and materials.



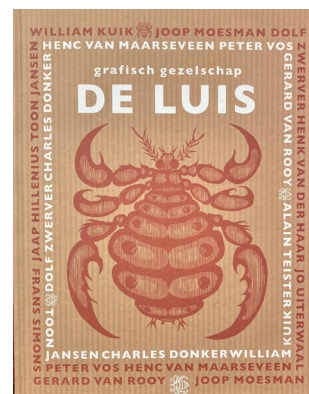
Joyce Ennik, 2012. *Turf*, gum bichromate



Caroline Koenders, 2019. *Sky-light*, mezzotint

Not all former techniques share this revival. In the Netherlands traditional time-consuming techniques like mezzotint and lithography have very few practitioners nowadays. Only a few contemporary Dutch artists are specialized in mezzotint technique, e.g. Caroline Koenders. Technical skills are less appreciated than before: concept, expressiveness and context gain more attention, which is a disadvantage for printmaking.

Risograph printing is a technique related to screen printing and photo copy, using a stencil duplicator. Essentially it is a reproduction technique from the 20th century, printing every colour separately. During the last decade it gained rapidly in popularity in the Netherlands, like in some other countries. It gives printmaking a whole new impulse, and in the Netherlands it certainly is a boost for printmaking and it effects its position, even on art academies. It appears to fit the scene that seeks other routes to reach the public. During the last decade, zines and handprinted magazines have acquired their place in the art community, with special fairs, workshops for artists and for amateurs, collectors of special editions and so on. It often goes together with engagement and irony, with absurdism, playfulness; no art for the white museum walls but graphic novels and zines. This might in a way be a continuation of another kind of traditional print, the so-called popular print. Like in other parts of Europe, from about 1650 till 1900 a huge production of



Gerard van Rooij, linocut; Toon Jansen letterpress, 1971. *De Luis*



Artist run studio in Eindhoven, 2019

25. Koot, R., editor (2008) *Grafisch Gezelschap De Luis 1960-1980: individualisten in clubverband*, Amsterdam (Hercules Segers Foundation)



popular prints can be seen: children's prints, penny prints (*centsprenten* in Dutch) and school prints. These prints are often woodcuts, with a diversity of subjects, birds, flowers, biblical scenes, etc. This definitely deserves a closer look, but for this essay we only mention it for its possible link to contemporary trends, like graphic novels.

### Printmaking at the academy

Until the 1990s most Dutch art academies (about ten in the Netherlands) had printing facilities and printmaking has been part of the curriculum. In the beginning of the 21st century printing became a part of the curriculum of visual arts instead of a field of study of its own. There are still a few academies that have preserved the whole workshop, as it was before. In the last decade we see a renewed interest. It seems that craftsmanship is gaining in popularity and students like making prints by hand. Risoprinting definitely plays a role in the increasing popularity for printmaking.

### Contemporary printmaking

Obviously printmaking follows the trends and tendencies in the contemporary art scene and collaborations between artists are a part of that. Artists can choose to show their works outside the white cube, or make their work into an event that needs participation of the public. The French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud calls this relational aesthetics (*a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space*)<sup>26</sup>. We definitely see that trend in the Netherlands as well. A good example are the monumental woodprints of Himmelsbach and a series of invited artists, all making portraits of the undocumented people in Dutch cities. Together it has become a series, to be spread and glued on walls by the public, a paper monument for the paperless, giving them literally a face.

As already mentioned, in contemporary printmaking we can recognize the tradition of landscapes, the influence of artists run open studios, the risen popularity of zines and graphic novels, the international tendency called relational aesthetics, and the revaluation of some traditional techniques and handicraft. Obviously we have printmakers of all kinds. We will name a few other features.

Geometric abstraction has a special role in Dutch art history. In the second decade of the twentieth century, in the wave of modernist movements, a very abstract and geometric style was developed in The Netherlands. De Stijl or the Style was a movement seeking for harmony in utmost abstraction<sup>27</sup>, which had a large influence on architecture and design from that time onwards. This geometric abstract art has had waves and periods, utmost abstract in its lack of representation, averse to subjectivity and expression of emotion, and we still can recognize it nowadays.

We also want to mention the influence of M.C. Escher (1898 – 1972). He might be the most popular Dutch printmaking artist, and his work is famous all over the world, mostly by posters and jigsaws.

26. Bourriaud, Nicolas (2002). Relational Aesthetics. Translated by Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland. Dijon: Les presses du réel. p. 113.

27. Mondriaan, P. (1922), Het neo-plasticisme (de nieuwe beelding) en zijn (hare) realiseering in de muziek. De Stijl, 5e jaargang no.1, DBNL



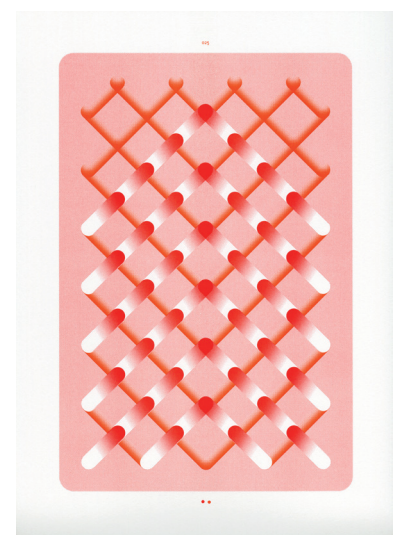
Astrid Florentinus, 2017. Sphere, risograph printed zine



Workshop zines at the art academy St Joost @ Printmaking St Joost (instagram)



Himmelsbach e.a. 2021, A paper monument for the paperless. woodcut portraits



Sigrid Calon, TTE O 025, risoprint

Some other contemporary, probably global trend, is the looser definition of graphic art. We see adapted age-old techniques, prints with other materials, on other media, 3D experiments, digital processes and mixed techniques. Printmaking has changed from a series of traditional techniques into a field of possibilities.

### Infrastructure

Finally we would like to give a short overview of the organizations involved in printmaking in the Netherlands.

Three museums in the Netherlands have printmaking as their main subject of interest:

*GRID* - museum for the history of printing, *Huis van het Boek* – museum about books and letterpress and a collection of artists books, *Nederlands Steendrukmu-*

*seum* – about lithography. Besides that there are also smaller museums that have equipment like letterpresses and sometimes give demonstrations.

*Grafiekplatform* is a national association in which printmaking artists, galleries and museums, printing studios and collectors of prints are united. Most of the members are printmaking artists. Grafiekplatform organizes member meetings and every now and then an exhibition.

*Drukwerk in de Marge* is a national foundation, that unites all interested in letterpress. Once a year a fair is organized and there is a website with all kinds of information about printmaking and letterpress, and the possibility to make contact with other printmakers and bookbinders.

*Grafein Foundation* is an independent cultural Public Benefit Organisation (PBO – in dutch: ANBI). It initiates, facilitates and participates in printmaking projects in and beyond The Netherlands. The foundation serves to promote printmaking in all its facets. This includes artists, institutions and print-art collectors. Grafein works with a network of friends and advisors.

The printmaking studios, beforementioned, are a main location of exchange and an important meeting point for printmaking artists.

Recently, because of the registration of printing and printmaking for intangible cultural heritage, a cooperation between all the aforementioned parties and parties from the printing industry has been realized. A printmakers day will be organized in March 2023, in the Netherlands, in line with the printmakers day in Germany.

### In Conclusion

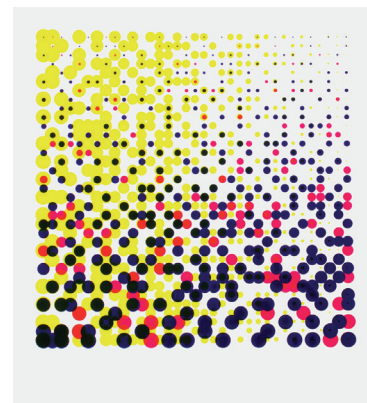
We paid attention to the fact that the Netherlands has flourished in the 17th century, resulting in techniques and a visual language we still can recognize in today's printmaking. In the 19th century a shift took place, dividing printmaking in mass production and art prints. In the Netherlands this repeatedly led to collaborations and artists organizations, which also shaped and still shapes the face of printmaking nowadays.

Obviously there is so much more to tell and we do injustice to many artists, tendencies and trends, by only highlighting parts of Dutch printmaking history.

For the contemporary art scene, we have observed a recent period of undervaluation of technical expertise, which is a disadvantage for printmaking. However, the last decade(s) a revival of attention for handicraft and traditional craftsmanship can be observed, which might be beneficial for the position of printmaking. Especially risograph printing has gained popularity and has an influence on the position of printmaking in the Netherlands. We see a rising interest in some areas of printmaking, which also translates into more experiments and more mixed techniques. Not all printing methods benefit, but the overall position of printmaking seems to be changing for the better in the Netherlands.

Eindhoven, 2022

Grafein Foundation  
[www.grafein.nl](http://www.grafein.nl)



Rogier Arents, 2019. New Window, screen print





# Literature and images

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Rogier Arents, 2019. New Window, screen print

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Siemen Dijkstra, 2017. Winterwad, woodprint

Cornelis Dusart, between 1670 and 1704. The sight, about the five senses , mezzotint and engraving. Rijksmuseum RP-P-1906-3107 <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.43467>

Joyce Ennik, 2012. Turf, gum bichromate

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Hercules Segers, c. 1622 - c. 1625. Distant View with a Road and Mossy Branches, line etching, printed in dark blue on cotton prepared with a yellowish-grey, lead-based ground, coloured with paint in alternating sections. Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-810. [hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.37274](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.37274)

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