

A Life In Woodblocks

Leon Loughridge

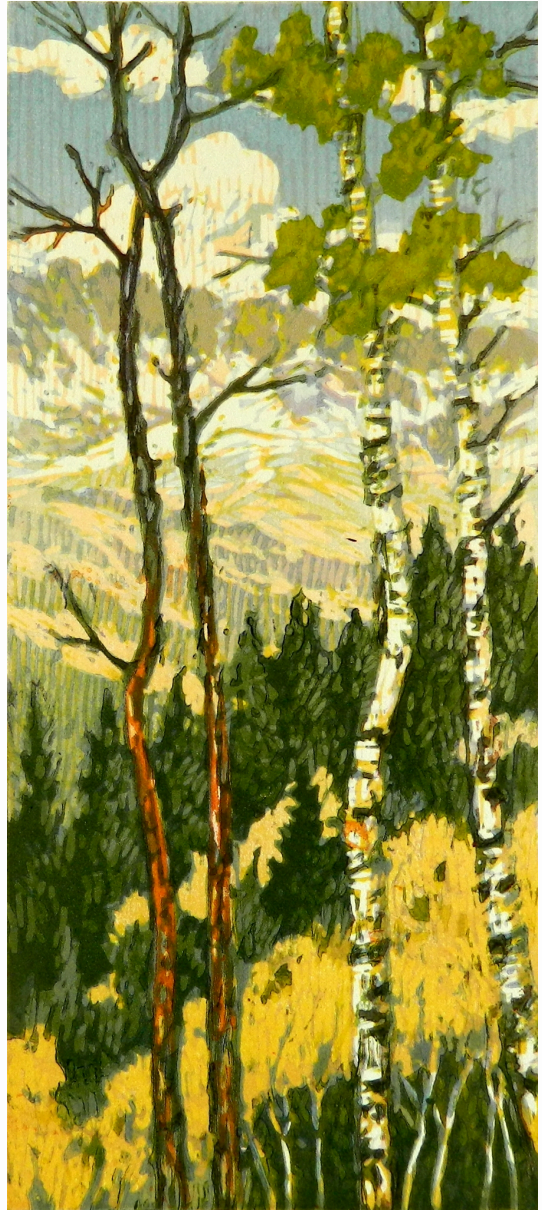


Cicuye Morning, Woodblock, 16" x 20", Moku Hanga

Artist Bio, The Process,
Collections and Exhibits

Artist Statement

As a print maker, I want to record in printed form the elated feelings I have from my original plan-aire sketches and paintings. Sketching is a very direct and invigorating encounter with the subject, while creating a print in the studio becomes more methodical. The challenge of translating a painterly image into a block print is to capture the energy of the original into the print, not to merely duplicate the image. The technical challenges presented by the printmaking medium must be understood in order to be controlled with intuitive ease. Handling the technical aspects of relief printing with confidence allows an artist to treat them as expressive tools, and not as limitations. When the handling of a medium becomes intuitive, the analytical process of building and creating a printed image becomes as invigorating as the original sketch was in the beginning. To see that the passion of the original sketch has been translated into the print is the artists' reward.



Gnarled Aspen,
Woodblock, Walnut Oil Based Ink, 9" x 6",

Catalog Courtesy of
McLary Fine Art
225 Canyon Road
Santa Fe, NM 87501

505 988-1161

Bio

Born; Denver, Colorado 1952

Colorado Institute of Art 1971-1972

United States Army, Graphic Designer 1972-1975

Having grown up on a Northern New Mexico ranch, Leon's connection to the Southwestern landscape came naturally. His grandmother's involvement in Northern New Mexico art circles exposed him to the arts from an early age. Later study at the Colorado Institute of Art along with private study reinforced his abilities. While in the army, stationed in Germany as an illustrator, he was able to attend classes on the old master's techniques and travel extensively throughout



Painting at the Couse Studio

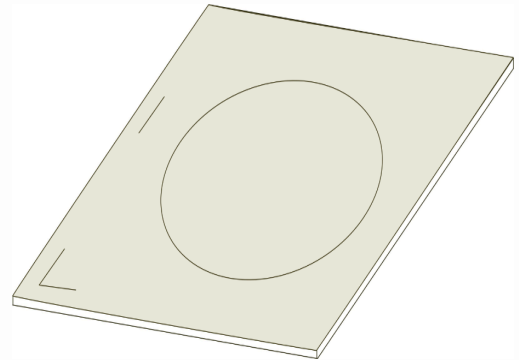
Europe. On his return to Colorado, Leon began study of the intaglio techniques and to sell the prints in mountain galleries. In 1998, Leon purchased his first letterpress and received immediate success with the woodblock prints he produced. In 2003, he started printing using the Japanese method of printmaking. The versatile layering of color in the woodblock process allowed him to better capture the atmospheric qualities of the Southwestern landscape that has such a strong meaning for him.



Couse's Easel, Woodblock, 9" x 6", Commission for the Couse-Sharp Foundation, 2015.

Transferring The Image

One of the attractions of the Japanese print method is the hands-on quality throughout the whole process. The process has been in use for over six hundred years and remains basically the same process as when it began. It is a process steeped in tradition and established procedures. There is a history of artisans using predecessors knowledge as a spring board for



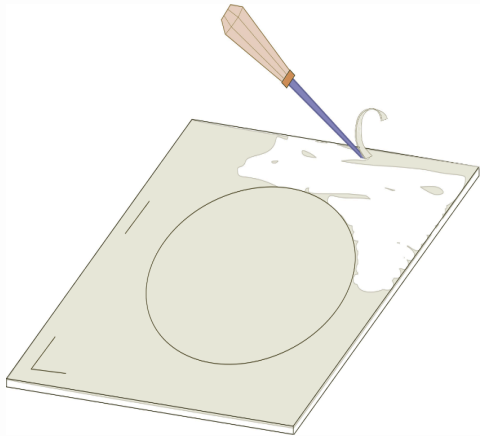
their own artistic endeavors.

A line drawing is created of the desired image on a sheet of tracing paper. The line drawing is then flipped and transferred to a block with a carbon paper.

The woodblock was traditionally a cherry wood panel. A linden plywood is most commonly used by contemporary artists. The linden is easy to carve, inexpensive, and quite durable.

Registration guide marks are made at a corner and one length which will be used to register the paper to the carved area of the block. The width between the registration mark and the image edge becomes the paper margin around the printed image.

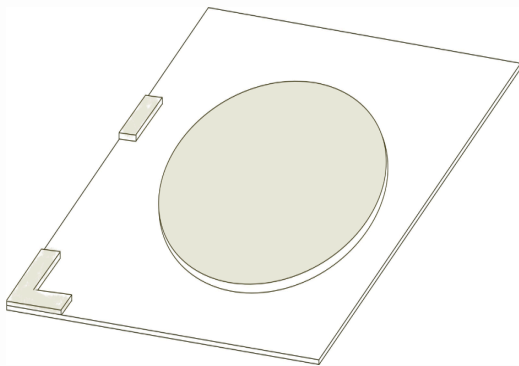
Carving



With the line drawing transferred onto the block, the carving process begins. In relief printing, areas that do not print are carved away, leaving the areas to print in relief.

I like to begin by carving the “gutters” or margins around the area to be printed. Care is taken to maintain the registration marks which are critical to registration of the multiple colors to be printed.

The depth of the carve depends on the width



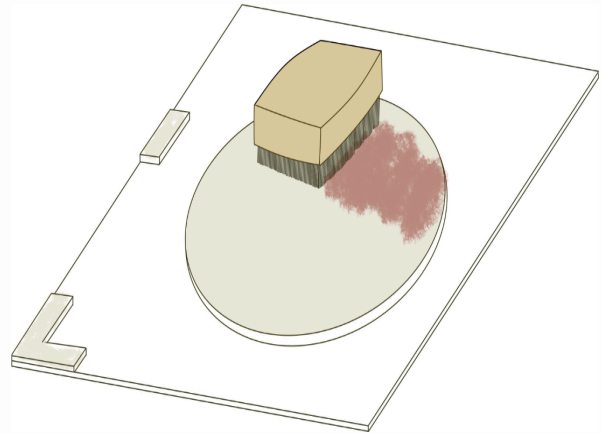
of the area carved away. Wide carve outs require more depth while close carvings need less depth as the closer relief areas keep the paper from sagging and touching the carved areas.

Up until the late 19th century, an engraver would carve the blocks from drawing the artist provided. A great deal of skill was required by the engraver to carve intricate details or script to resemble a fluid brushstroke when printed.



Inking

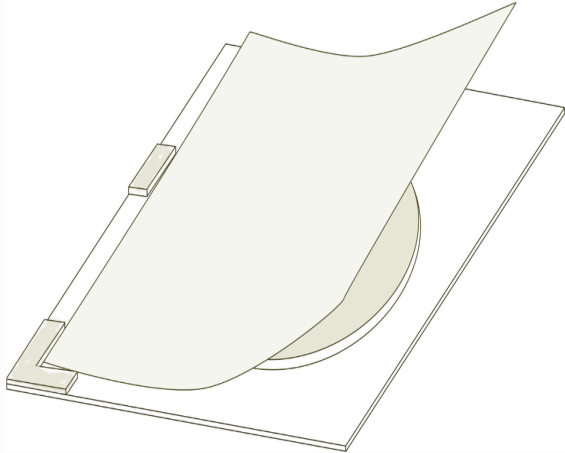
Contemporary Japanese printmaking is commonly referred to as *Moku Hanga* which translates as *wood print*. The joy of the technique is the hands-on aspect throughout the entire process. At each stage of the print process, the artist can manipulate the technique to vary the end result.



This is especially true when inking the block. The ink, a mixture of rice paste, water and pigment, is applied to the relief areas of the block with a square stiff-haired brush. Too much ink and the printed image will have indistinct blurred edges. Too little ink applied will result in “bald” patches where little to no ink transferred to the paper.

The goal is to have a perfect balance of moisture between the brush, the block and the paper, which is a matter of feel and sensory learning. With a good balance of moisture, the printed image is crisp with consistent color saturation on printed areas.

The Paper



Once the block has been inked, a slightly moist paper is registered to the carved block using the kento guides, the registration tabs carved into the block. The kento guides allow for accurate registration which is critical to align the various printed colors.

Again, the perfect balance of moisture is essential to a clean print. If the paper is too wet, the ink will bleed out, creating indistinct edges. Paper that is too dry will not pick up the ink in areas, producing uneven coloration.

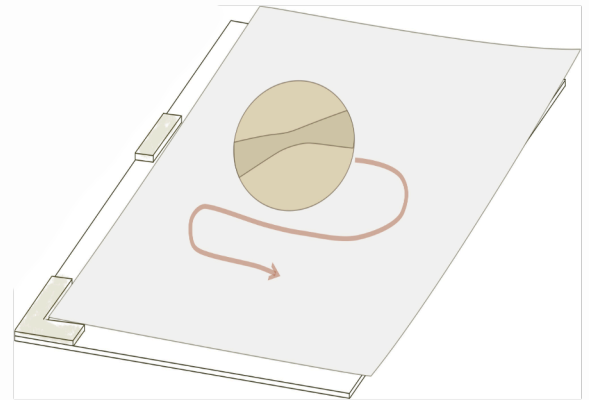
A quality Japanese kozo paper is beneficial and makes the print process less problematic. I prefer a softer kozo paper with less sizing allowing color to transfer easily to the paper.

Japanese paper is made from the kozo bush, mitsumata bush or gampi tree. The stems, when boiled, turn into long fibers which make the paper surprisingly durable and pliable.



Printing

With the paper registered to the inked block, a baren is used to apply pressure to the block, transferring the ink to the paper. The baren, a hand held circular disk wrapped with a textured bamboo leaf, is the “press” in Japanese printing. The texture of the bamboo leaf creates pressure points when



the baren is gently rubbed across the back of the paper. A firm pressure will push the paper onto the inked raised areas of the block. And can even emboss the paper. For delicate line work, a gentle pressure with the baren will transfer the line work to the moist paper.



The Inks

Oil Based Inks: Oil based inks are most commonly used by the Western style of print making where the ink is rolled out to a thin layer on a glass palette and then transferred to the carved block using a stiff rubber or leather roller. With the paper aligned to the block, pressure is applied with a mechanical press to transfer the ink to the paper. Various oils are used to formulate the inks with each oil lending its own characteristic to the ink. I view this as a *mechanical printing process* where the ink is manipulated with the roller and pressure by the press.

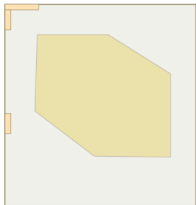
Moku Hanga: In the Japanese method of printing, a thin layer of water based ink is applied to the carved block by hand with a stiff-haired rectangular brush. The image is transferred using a textured round disk called a *baren* which applies hand pressure to the back of the paper registered on the block to transfer the image to the paper. Throughout the entire print process, the print-maker is directly *in touch* with each step of the print process.

Reduction Process

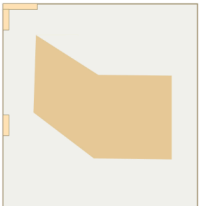
The Reduction Process uses one block to print multiple colors as the printing area of the block is reduced or carved away between color runs.

The Carved Block

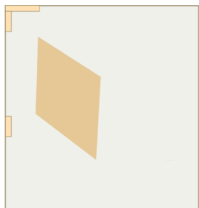
The First Carve



The Second Carve

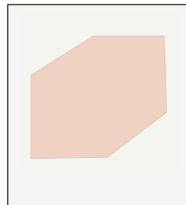


The Third Carve

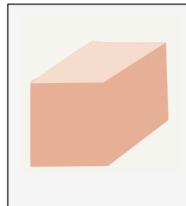


The Print

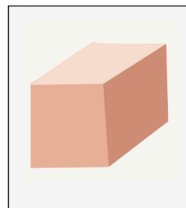
The First Color Run



The Second Color Run



The Third Color Run



Color Run One: The block is carved leaving all areas that will print as raised. The block is inked and a color is printed over *all* the sheets of paper for the edition.

Color Run Two: The light areas of the image are carved away on the block leaving the mid-tones and darks in relief. This is the point of no return. Once the light areas are carved away, the block cannot be reprinted. Using the newly carved block, a darker color is printed over the previous color on the entire stack of paper.

Color Run Three: The block is carved once again, reducing the printing area to just the darks. A darker color is mixed and then printed over the previous two colors. The completed print has three colors printed using a single block carved away between color runs.

Exhibits

Museum Exhibitions

Relief Print Renaissance, Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS.	June-August, 2022
PACE Art Center, Parker, CO, Evolving Traditions	May-July 2020
Albuquerque Art Museum, Albuquerque, NM, The Carved Line	2016
Birger Sandzen Memorial Gallery, Lindsborg, KS, Peaks To Prairies	2012
Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO, Western Horizon	2011
Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS	2010
Sangre de Cristo Fine Art Center, Pueblo, CO, Saddles, Cabins and Mountain Vistas,	2004

Invitational Exhibitions

National Cowboy Heritage Museum, Small Works, Great Wonders, Oklahoma City, OK	2012-2024
Gilcrease Museum, Collectors Choice, Tulsa, OK	2015
Salmagundi Club, New York, NY, American Masters	2008-2015
Coors Western Art Exhibit, National Western Stock Show, Denver, CO,	2003 - 2025
Sangre de Cristo Art Center, Pueblo, CO, Representing The West	2004-11, 2013-14
Loveland Museum, CO, Governor's Show	2006, 2012
Panhandle Plains Museum, Canyon, TX, Invitational Western Exhibit,	2011

Gallery Exhibitions

Gerald Peters Gallery, Sacred Ground, Santa Fe, NM	2023
Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM, Reimagining New Mexico	2019
Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM, Las Montanas de Santa Fe	2013
Elements 5280 Gallery, Greenwood Village, CO, Desert Skies	2014
Goodwin Fine Art, Denver, CO, Meridian	2013
Breckenridge Gallery, Breckenridge, Fall Colors	2011-15
American Masters Gallery, Kansas City, MO, Santa Fe Trail, Cimarron Cutoff	2011
Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM, 3Perspectives	2011
Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe NM, Colores de Otono	2010
Vail International Gallery, Vail, CO, Timberlines' Edge	2010

Exhibits / Collections

American Legacy Gallery, Kansas City, MO, Spring in the Flint Hills	2010
Dry Creek Art Press. Denver, CO, Land of Ancients-Beef Basin,	2010
Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM, Las Montanas de Santa Fe	2009
Vail International Gallery, Vail CO, Spring Thaw in the Gore Range	2008
American Legacy Gallery, Kansas City MO, The Flint Hills,	2008
Pinon Fine Art, Littleton CO, The Santa Fe Trail, New Mexico,	2007
Pinon Fine Art, Littleton CO, The Santa Fe Trail, Colorado	2006
Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM, The Place Between	2006
Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, Carved Images	2005
Great Southwest Gallery, Colorado Springs, CO, Vistas del Corazon,	2004
Pinon Fine Art, Denver, CO , Paintings and Woodblocks,	2004

Collections

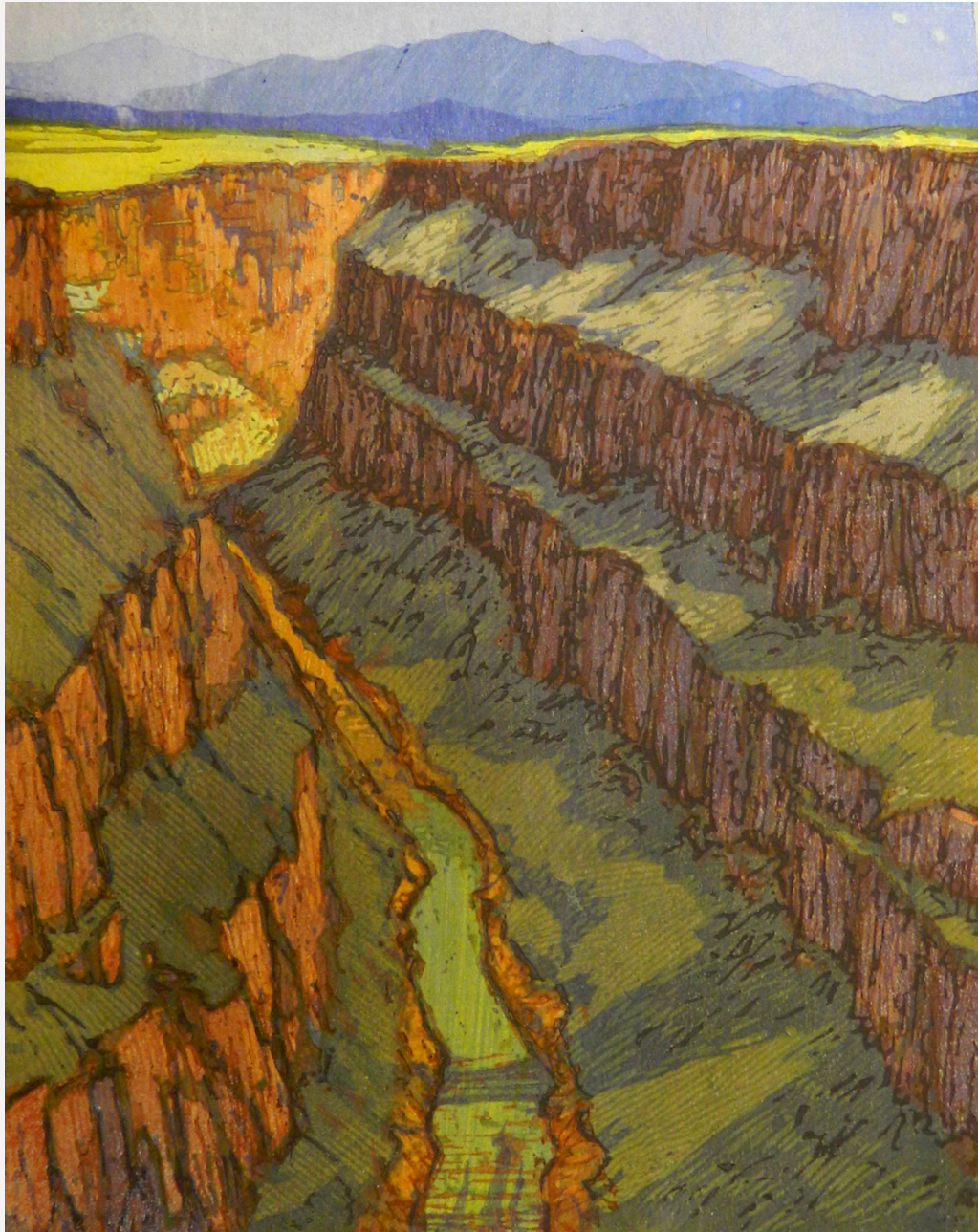
Jundt Art Museum, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA	2023
Benson Hotel, Art Collection, Aurora, CO	2023
Wickenburg Art Museum, Wickenburg, AZ	2014
Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ	2013
Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS	2010
Wichita Carnegie Library, Fidelity Bank, KS	2010
Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA	2010
Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS	2009
Colorado University Library, Boulder, CO	2009
Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO	2008
Denver Public Library, Western History Dept, Denver, CO	2007
Sangre de Cristo Art Center,	
Permanent Collection, Pueblo, CO	2007
Breckenridge Music Festival, Breckenridge, CO	2005
Colorado Mountain Club, Golden, CO	2004
Historic Denver, Denver, CO	1992
Colorado School of Mines, Golden CO	1984



Along Canyon Road
Woodblock, 12" x 12"
Linseed Oil Based Ink



Couse Studio
Woodblock, 9" x 9"
Walnut Oil Based Ink



An Airy Silence
Woodblock, 11" x 8.5"
Moku Hanga



Cicuye Morning
Woodblock, 16" x 20"
Moku Hanga



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