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Personal Puzzles: Exploring Meaning in a Printmaking Workshop

Sally Jayne Rydalch
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Personal Puzzles: Exploring Meaning in a Printmaking Workshop

Sally Jayne Rydalch

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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Master of Arts

In an effort to assist self-guided artists in constructing meaning and creativity through the technique of printmaking, the author has compiled a curriculum to engage these artist/students in thoughtful research, discussion, art-making, and critique. In this qualitative case study there are eight participants from age 14 to 79, with varying educational and art experience, who enrolled in a relief print workshop with no recompense other than participation. The particular benefits of learning relief printing are described. The author’s goal is exploration of student responses to a curriculum centered around constructing meaning and engaging in introspective and informed discussion. In fostering open inquiry and analysis, the author was able to cultivate a place of personal discovery in a community class and gain insights into teaching, learning, and curriculum design.

Keywords: constructing meaning, personal meaning, printmaking, case study, workshop, community, relief print, self-taught artists, multi-age class, reverse approach, Sandy, Utah
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Chapter 1 Introduction

After a brief semester in college, in which I was able to take a couple of art courses, I spent the next few decades working on my own. I continued to make art, incorporating new skills or art methods through trial and error, reading books, and enrolling in community classes or workshops. I considered myself a self-taught artist, but I frequently felt like there were pieces missing from the big picture I called “my art.” After much encouragement from my family, especially my daughter, I followed her to Utah State University where she studied Animal Science and I worked toward a Bachelor of Fine Art degree. I was soon immersed in the visual arts.

There were frequent opportunities for analyzing and critiquing art in the drawing and painting emphasis, and one incident stands out in my mind. About halfway through the semester, during a particularly positive critique when our work seemed to be rapidly improving, our professor stopped us and asked why things had changed. One student mentioned something she had discovered about her work in a recent woodcut print she had made, another mentioned an “aha” moment during an Intro to Printmaking class. He paused, then asked us to raise our hands if we were currently enrolled in or had taken printmaking in the last semester. More than half of us raised our hands.

His face took on a bewildered look. “What is it,” he said, “about printmaking?” The class waited in silence for him to continue. “I work with you students’ semester after semester, and then send you downstairs for one printmaking class, and, bam – you suddenly get it! Your paintings have better composition. Your approach is more thorough and mature. What happens down there?!?” After a brief chuckle, we began throwing ideas around; what was it about printmaking that changed our art? Was it the printmaking process that forced us to plan and
analyze our compositions, because there is no “uncarving” a block? Could it be the subtractive method used to build a block print that caused us to look at things differently? Was it Professor Puzey’s method of teaching and critiquing, always keeping it fresh with concrete feedback we could use on our next project?

My personal conclusion was that the answer was: yes, to all of these. The printmaking process, the subtractive method, and the professor’s method of teaching all made a huge difference in how I envisioned, constructed and thought about my art. Not only were the critiques helpful and non-threatening, critique was an opportunity for everyone to share and make suggestions for individuals in a respectful manner. The atmosphere was relaxed, but with high expectations of student work and behavior. Whether the class was being taught by the printmaking professor or a grad student, one on one help and advice was available throughout a project, no matter whose class we were in. Individual written feedback on each completed print that included composition, technical mastery, overall effectiveness, self-challenge, and usually a note providing encouragement or suggestion was very helpful, as that could be re-read and incorporated days or weeks after critique. There were many painting and drawing instructors that provided some of those same opportunities and feedback, but there was one major difference in this course: the medium of relief.

*Figure 1.* Valley Road. This woodcut print was inspired by my commute to USU, and what I experienced during that drive.

*Figure 2.* Greeting Dawn. A friend I met while working for a weaving exhibit for the Anthropology museum invited me to stay at her hogan on the reservation. This is the view that greeted me each morning of that peaceful, rejuvenating visit.
printmaking. It was, more than anything, the unique characteristics of printmaking that changed things for me and for many of the other students.

Unlike painting and drawing where pigment is applied in some fashion directly to a surface, in a relief print, marks are made by carving out where you don’t want the pigment to appear on the paper. Each groove carved in the board, as well as body movement and temperament are often apparent in the final print. Careless hacking away at the block, or careful choices in tool and stroke yield very different results. In relief printing the artist also needs to plan ahead. Once a mark is carved, it cannot be un-carved but must be worked into the print. The artist must be thinking steps ahead, because there is no painting over or erasing.

Because of the nature of the relief print, everything must be planned and carved in a mirror image of the final print. I think this reverse thinking, backwards approach needed for relief print interrupted our mark-making and compositional habits. There is an old adage that states; if you continue approaching a problem the same way you will keep getting the same result. Since art is a creative, problem-solving skill, I believe we experienced growth because we changed our approach. We had to stop and re-think things and plan more carefully. The simple act of seeing a composition in reverse changes its appearance. The tactile nature of crafting the block through carving allows ample time to think and discuss possibilities. This, combined with the multiple ways in which one works and thinks in reverse prompted me to explore how making relief prints could be a method for inquiring about constructing meaning among my own students. Because relief print is not as frequently practiced as drawing and painting in many art programs, the unfamiliarity of the experience can interrupt habits for established artists, and help new artists overcome preconceived shortcomings. Printmaking can level the playing field for everyone in the classroom since lack of experience is often common, and making a great print
doesn’t necessarily depend on drawing or drafting skills.

Relief print is not a jigsaw puzzle with a picture on the box that needs to be put together correctly. It is a puzzle with countless combinations, pieces to use or discard, with a myriad of results possible. Artists play with the pieces until they fit into something that brings the artist a step closer to the concepts they’re seeking to understand, express, or construct. This creative arrangement of the variables in a print allows the artist to create something that is more than just the sum of those pieces. The relief print process can also act as both a means and a metaphor for how the artist can shape meaning and connect their artmaking to their own life. It is the combination of what we put in to something as well as what we take or leave out that yields the final result.

I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to return to college to get my degree, but as a mature adult I began to wonder; could my art have been different if I had been exposed to these processes of critique or theory earlier in life? Would printmaking have made an impact at some other time, or was it simply the timing that informed my work from that point onward? What if I didn’t have to wait three decades after high school to be enrolled in college courses to learn and internalize the formal composition skills and language of critique - or make that leap to describe or discuss what I’m personally trying to express? Could I bring opportunities to the community of other self-guided artists, that might take them out of their artistic habits, allow them to view things differently, and provide an opportunity for discussion?

Statement of the Problem

In settings outside university or art school programs of study, there is no requisite or sequential exposure to fundamental principles and elements of art, critical analysis, or art theory. These higher education models of curriculum content could be included in community courses,
but are often left out because of the more informal structure of the programs. This type of content may be difficult to find in community art courses.

Students of art outside of formal university programs choose their path and seek creative outlet and instruction from many different sources. Self-guided students are motivated and engaged in the art making process, but they often are not aware of what it is they are missing. Some may have had little or no exposure to the traditions or convention or the “why’s” of the very art they’re creating, or the tools to analyze and discuss it. In the decades I spent as a self-guided artist I often described my abilities and learning as the *Swiss Cheese Effect*; I recognized that there were holes, something missing from my knowledge and skill base, and I wanted to find out what these deficiencies were. That was an important factor motivating me to earn my undergraduate degree.

These personal experiences led me to ask: What would happen if I incorporated the focused learning opportunities I enjoyed in undergraduate classes to a group of individuals, outside the formal university setting, using the same printmaking method that was so instructive and instrumental for me? Would the focused limitations that relief print provides, and the reverse approach described earlier allow students to understand and apply fundamental principles and elements of art, critical analysis or art theory to their art-making in such a way that fosters the construction of meaning and brings personal clarity?

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to gain understanding on how meaningful art can be created in a classroom within the constraints of the printmaking processes and how critical analysis or art theory influence student art making and discourse.
Research questions

1. How do students construct meaning through understanding and applying the artistic constraints of printmaking?

2. How does the language and method of description, including interpretation and evaluation associated with art criticism, influence how students understand and discuss art; how do these conversations make the work more meaningful?

3. What is the relationship among technical skill, creativity, and personally meaningful expression?

4. How does learning with a focus on meaning as well as technical aspects of creating emotive marks influence student artistry and relationship with their work?

Research Hypotheses

1. Spending time exploring things that are personally meaningful and using that as a basis to begin printing will help students be more invested in the final result, and better able to choose and assess what they want the results to be.

2. Learning to critique art will provide students with a language of description and interpretation that will help them understand nuances, context and meaning within their own work and in the work of others.

3. The negative mark-making approach (carving out what will not be inked) of linocut print will provoke new understanding about creating images, and provide students with a shift in their approach to artmaking.

4. The printmaking process, especially the inability to undo a carved mark or paint
5. over it will cause students to plan, anticipate results, and work with what they can’t change.

6. As students develop and apply technical skills, their work will come closer to their artistic plans. By learning technique students will acquire the ability to better achieve their desired results.

This study took place over a six-week period in January/February of 2017. An important element of the study was the curriculum designed for this workshop. I will be using a case study methodology for this project.

**Printmaking**

Exploring printmaking practices changed my art making. I found that the subtractive nature of relief print was different from most mediums. Not only was the working image a mirror of the final artwork, I was used to adding dark lines to white paper, not taking out the whites and leaving what would become black. Although it sounds very similar, taking out the whites instead of adding in the darks, the approach is opposite of what most art students have done for most of their lives. Rather than making a dark mark on white paper, the areas that are dark must be left untouched. The student must visually transpose the image, and carve out the areas that will not print. I think this imposes a shift in thinking, like walking around an object to see it from different angles. As individuals, what we choose to omit from our habits, food, or language, is just as important in defining who we are as what we include. Metaphorically, printmaking functions in the same way.

When working with black ink and light paper the effect is graphic and bold. Even in complex images there is a simplicity to the black or white element. There is no true grey area. The artist must commit early, and with physical confidence carve through the linoleum or wood.
Those emotive marks are seen differently; it was easier for me to see bold strokes, or frenetic hacking, or calm precision, and relate it to my own emotions and body movement as I carved. The artist’s marks became an extension of the artist’s intent and meaning of the art print. For example, in her work, Kathe Kollwitz’ marks are full of energy, in an almost fearful and desperate way. William Morris' work is patterned and carefully executed - it is stable and rational without the energetic tension Kollwitz displays.

I found that when I just made marks without planning, they weren't expressing what I wanted in the painting. Instead they were haphazard or hasty slashes if I only had a few minutes to carve, or was hurrying before a deadline, or not paying attention. My carving could easily move away from desired marks and resulted in marks full of angst and emotion in a print meant to be calm. It was difficult to distinguish one object from another if all the strokes were the made the same way or with the same tool. Painting uses the hand, arm, and shoulder to make long fluid lines or short strokes. In printmaking I have to use my entire body: one hand is carving while the other steadies, guides, and keeps the blade in control; my upper body is turning and pressing, shifting weight to control the cut and get the mark where I want it to be. Perhaps my own experience in making marks also helps me visualize the body movement in the marks I see in other prints. Although there are a lot of similarities, the way the marks are made makes painting and printmaking very different processes.

Seeing approaches and composition differently than in painting or drawing was like changing the lens in a camera. I saw the same basic principles and elements with a new eye. These experiences as a printmaker influence all areas of my art. I dabble or fiddle less with my brush when painting. I plan more, and I value a single stroke of the brush or pen as much as a stroke of the carving tool. I'm more deliberate. I often imagine things as a black and white print
first, and that helps me see where I need to emphasize value. That first experience in printmaking gave me a shift in paradigm and helped me look at art with a new perspective.

Discussions of printmaking and the foundational elements and principles of composition in making a print are no different than those used in painting or many other visual forms of art, but the approach and construction of the image can be different. As a student, preparation and planning is a step that can be easily dismissed or overlooked. We can feel overconfident in painting and just begin thinking that we can always add more brush strokes to change the work later. Printmaking imposes the additional constraint in that, if the student artist fails to plan ahead the marks that are carved out, cannot be un-carved. Skipping steps in layout and composition elements are often very apparent later, because they can’t be covered up.

Each new thing we experience or learn changes us, and in turn influences our viewpoints and how we learn. Learning about, or creating art, can be a catalyst for growth and understanding. Having the opportunity to dive into printmaking methods in my undergraduate studies accelerated that growth.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

Creative Self Expression and Personal Growth

In past centuries one learned art as a trade; becoming an apprentice to learn the skills and styles a master artist had developed. An apprentice would typically copy and trace drawings and paintings, imitating other art for the first several years (Sider, 2007). As art academies were founded in the 1500’s, instruction by imitation was also a matter of course. New ideas and individuality were not encouraged (Jack, 1976).

In the last century, there was an unmistakable movement toward creative expression as being the key to the art-making process, rather than specific skill accomplishment (Simpson, et al., 1998). By the latter half of the twentieth century encouraging self-expression in art was an important part of art education, especially for the K-12 grades. Even if programs fell short of actually providing that individual a creative outlet, the overarching goal of individuality became more mainstream (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998). In today’s art education culture, those practices have been solidified and gone a step farther, showing that creative expression in art is more than just a good thing; it benefits individuals psychologically, physically, and socially (Cohen, 2006).

As Elliot Eisner states:

Work in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture. (Eisner, 2002, p. 3)

Eisner further affirms that this process allows us to conceive concepts and imagine possibilities. It gives us license to imagine something different than we see, to create something more, instead of simply recalling what already is. It allows us to play with ideas and put pieces of
our thoughts and experiences together in new ways, with new relationships, making a new whole. There are those who have developed this ability to play and imagine very strongly, and those who have not. The students in the course that formed the case for this study fell at many points on this scale of play and imagination.

A significant part of the art making process was to help students consider making new connections and see new possibilities through their printmaking images, and to invite those who haven’t played with imagery and meaning in art to try. Students had the opportunity to tell the stories they know through imagery, or imagine what they want it to be (Eisner, 2002).

One response to the emphasis on self-expression was Discipline Based Art Education. DBAE sought to base art education on the fundamental disciplines within art including art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and studio production. As a result, the interpretation and analysis of art became a central feature in art education in addition to personal expression. My own curriculum draws on this approach in its use of art criticism.

Class Environment

In a small workshop such as the one I am describing in this study, participants tend to be encouraging and cooperate with their peers, are goal oriented, and find success in their individual artistic endeavors. The environment is friendly, and students will often share outside interests with each other. According to Townsend & Hicks, this is representative of an environment with low competition with high task orientation, where students are asked to take responsibility and clearly understand course objectives (Hicks & Townsend, 1995). An environment that is safe and hospitable can foster personal growth (Graham, 2009).

Participants in this workshop took the course to learn the process of relief print, and were engaged and motivated to express themselves in creative ways. For some, this course was a
break from the daily grind. Simply engaging in art making can be very fulfilling and a stress-relieving activity (Kaimal, Ray, & Muniz, 2016). Others had a love of creative expression and problem solving, or a drive for self-expression. Through providing an opportunity to explore imagery or subject matter within a personally meaningful context, participants received a much greater depth of art instruction and a means of further self-expression while learning the relief print process. By orienting students toward the possibilities of printmaking, within the contexts of artists who make prints, and allowing them to direct their own path, perception and interpretation results in discovery (Graham, 2009). In a classroom environment of exploring and researching, students increase critical thinking ability and gain new ways of knowing and producing knowledge (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998).

**Constructing Meaning**

Constructing meaning, or meaning-making is an active process. According to constructivist theorists, learning or knowledge happens through the interaction between experience and ideas. “Knowledge does not come to us from the outside nor is it something we are born with; it is something that is actively constructed over the course of many years” (Piaget, 1969). It is learning in action (Jakobson & Wickman, 2015). Meaning is constructed by the viewer of an artwork or the student artist making an artwork with personal significance. Meaning is not in the object or subject itself but is assigned or assembled by the individual. Much of the meaning we as individuals assign to art objects or artifacts is influenced by our cultural background, and varies from one community to another. Although a culture may assign meanings to artworks, meaning is also constructed by the individual (Jones, 2007). In my workshop, students constructed meaning from personal and cultural experiences. By using art, specifically printmaking in this case, to encourage investigation, representation, and
transformation of important ideas or experiences encountered in their world, meaning-making can occur through the student’s art (Malin, 2013).

Individual meaning and originality is highly valued in twenty-first century art, and in my workshop participants were given opportunities to explore individual style and artistic voice (Elkins, 2001). As form and symbol are created; a visual language is developed to represent the knowledge they’ve constructed into a completed puzzle. It is a kind of cognition that distinguishes artmaking and makes it more than just an emotional outlet (Gardner, 1982). There is “…a basic and pervasive human need to symbolize, to invent meanings, and to invest meanings in one’s world. It was a property of the human mind to search for and to find significances everywhere, to transform experience constantly to uncover new meanings.” (Gardner, 1982, p. 50). If, as Burton states, all children have the capacity for visual representation and the use of symbols in art making, then adults should also be able to tap into that potential, even if they find it more difficult than their child counterparts (Burton, 1992). The relief media is a unique combination of aesthetics using subtractive reasoning and technical ability. The use of printmaking media will be of critical importance in developing artistic thinking (Graham, 2001).

**Discussions Within the Classroom about Art and Ideas**

Marilyn G. Stewart calls discussions on key points the “Big” questions: those issues that might be raised while making or thinking about art. These philosophical dialogues should be incorporated into the curriculum, planning ahead to include topics discussed or presented to the students (Stewart, 1997). These “Big” questions include what the artist’s philosophy or context might be in the art being studied. Students might examine composition, and make critical judgments about whether the composition brings the print closer to or farther from their desired
meaning. They might also piece together aesthetics with motion, energy, or emotion used in carving or mark-making that becomes evident in the final print. The construction of artwork can include the use, re-use, or invention of symbolic language and visual culture. Imagination, theory, and technique will be integrated in discussing the “Big” questions with students (al-Radaideh, 2007).

My introduction to printmaking for students included master prints in digital form by historic and contemporary artists, and original prints by myself and other artists so students can see the surface texture, size, and details not discerned from digital images. Examples of artwork play an important part in teaching according to Cruz & Ellerbrock. Students learn visual cognitive skills from looking at the work of master artists and visual culture. An important part of learning from other artwork is learning to interpret, analyze, and identify personal meaning (Cruz & Ellerbrock, 2015). These critical understandings and knowledge can then become the springboard for their own creations (Cerkez, 2014; Bleed, 2005).

Contrary to some prevailing traditions that suggest that creativity should be encouraged through free expression with no model or example, some scholars believed that artistry and creativity are always influenced by artistic conventions and culture. Without borrowed images that enrich drawing, the language of drawing would be much poorer (Wilson, Hurwitz, & Wilson, 1987).

“One of the basic premises of this book on drawing for the schools is that works of art provide the basic models from which drawings are made. In short, art comes from art; drawing comes from drawing.

In spite of ourselves, we are all creatures of particular artistic and aesthetic societies – the society of child art, for example, or the art of record covers, of
comics. In this book, we suggest that children be made members of another artistic society, the richest and most important of all: the society of art to be found in art museums and galleries. Intimate association with the greatest creative models to be found in the visual arts can enhance students’ individuality, originality and inventiveness. (Wilson, Hurwitz, & Wilson, 1987, p. preface)

During this workshop we viewed my own original prints and those of local artists, and digital versions of prints by Emil Nolde, Kathe Kollwitz, Albrecht Durer, and William Morris. These artists exhibit a variety of printmaking styles and expression as well as varied cultural and historic influences. Visual art combines shape, form, and material with thoughts, feelings, and ideas to express or communicate in a visual or nonverbal language (Simpson, et al., 1998) which I attempted to describe, thus increasing critiquing skills.

Investigations of the work of artists included; material or technical construction of the work, aesthetic organization/composition or visual qualities, and interpretation of meaning or thought/practice of the artists (Vickery, 2006). Study of these three areas allowed students to critically explore their own work, both visually and verbally.

Brief historical context was given, but the reaction to the prints by these students was stressed in interpreting the visual clues that relate to the artists’ meaning, and defining connection to the student viewer. By viewing the art of others, students build on what they see. As Barrett stated:

All art is in part about other art… Art does not emerge within a vacuum. Artists generally are aware of the work of other artists, and often they are especially aware of the work of certain artists. Even naive artists, or artists who have not been
trained in university art departments or academies of art, are aware of and influenced by the visual representations in their societies (Barrett, 1994, p. 6).

Each student came to class with a mental reference of art they had viewed, either generally or specifically, and may be drawn to making. By viewing relief prints they can discern aspects of printmaking art that are personally relevant.

**Process Constraints**

Relief print by its nature is limited in the effects it produces. Working within constraints can effectively influence students (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008). In her book, *Creativity from Constraints: The Psychology of Breakthrough*, Patricia Stokes states: “Constraints help develop creativity in beginners and help experts structure and solve creativity problems. However, learning to choose and use constraints doesn’t guarantee creativity. What it does do is clarify and direct the creative process.” (Stokes, 2006, p. 131).

The constraints of relief printmaking employed as a tool to create boundaries for students, and in the process, enable students to clarify and construct personal meaning in their art making. By focusing on the possibilities within the medium, conspicuous as well as subtle effects can be explored and experienced. Because this was a new process for these students, it was also an opportunity for them to drop preconceived ideas and well-worn patterns of how art is approached. Printmaking, like most art, is not neat and orderly: there is always the unexpected mishap to turn into opportunity. The opportunity to use limitations or constraint to make new connections is an important part of the artistic process for many artists.

The printmaking craft is an old practice with a unique niche in the area of art and creative expression. Technicality and creativity must go hand in hand according to Michael Andrews:
Personal Puzzles: Exploring Meaning in a Printmaking Workshop

Essential to the production of a good print are ideas stimulated by personal experiences and an appropriate technique to express them. Finding this integral balance between symbolic expression and disciplined craftsmanship is the everlasting obligation of every teacher during any printmaking project (Andrews, 1964, p. 25).

That guidance given half a century ago is still appropriate in this workshop. Ideas and craftsmanship are interdependent in producing a final product. The curriculum is designed to teach the mechanics of relief printing, attending to detail, as well as giving opportunity for expression and independence.

Critique

Participants were asked to describe, interpret, and assess their own artwork in progress as well as the work of other students. They verbally expressed what they saw, then looked for other viewpoints or meaning that might inform their own artistic process. If students leave the critique experience more literate in aesthetic analysis, better able to describe and interpret work, better informed of different points of view, they may then use that information and experience in their own art. When students can communicate their views, and are heard, they feel empowered (Barrett, 2000). As discussions and critiques took place, participants could increase their ability to analyze as well as increase vocabulary for expression through description of form, medium, subject, visual analysis, interpretation, and conclusion (Barrett, 1994).

Each participant brought different experiences to the class, as well as individual reactions in class. Encouraging individuals to use those experiences as a basis for their art was consistent throughout the workshop. “…educational practice does not display its highest virtues in uniformity but in nurturing productive diversity” (Eisner, 1998, p. 68).
As Eisner (2002) put it, “Regardless of intended aims, students learn both more and less than they are taught.” (p.70). I was able to mentor and enjoy this process with students and see what the results would be. By also asking the students to consider their subject using emotion, and executing the print through choice of design elements and types of marks, it gave the students opportunities to approach their work from several vantage points.

In suggesting the processes and reasons for helping students understand their art, Szekely explains:

Students who understand works they have created are able to set goals for themselves and, by examining each new work at various stages of completion, guide their artworks during the process of creation. Once a work is completed they are able to describe it, assess it, and compare it with previous efforts; they can read in it clues to the utilization of the experiences it has provided. They understand how tools and materials worked for them and go beyond examination of their works to self-examination; each new work gives them a surer sense of their capabilities and interests. They have learned about themselves as artists from having gone through the process of producing the work. Students who really know their works and who through their work have examined the process and experience of making art, are able to devise both short-term and long-term goals. (Szekely, 1985, p. 39)

By incorporating critical analysis frequently during the printmaking process, students can increase their art skills while deepening their observation and understanding. Szekely also reminds us that artwork is made by thinking about it as much as it is physically working on it (Szekely, 1985). Giving participants a gateway to mentally explore their work during class
through critique and analysis, and out of class through individual tasks, greatly contributed to their artistic process. As Barrett stated:

By engaging in serious and thoughtful discussions about their artworks, students will likely improve their art-making. …increase students’ art learning in a broad sense so that they ultimately want to have art as part of their lives…. Good critical discussions will show learners that art provides unique insights into the world in a pleasurable and engaging way. (Barrett, 1997, p. xiii)
Chapter 3 Methodology

The case study as qualitative research is a search for understanding and meaning using in-depth description and analysis in a bounded context. That context or bounded system is the “what” that was studied. The analysis in this instance is individual meaning or expression in a specific printmaking workshop. This study is qualitative in nature because the goal is discovery and interpretation (Merriam, 2009). The design strategy of this methodology is an exploration (Yin, 1994). In my case, I am exploring student response to a printmaking curriculum designed to help individuals construct meaningful self-expression, develop technical skill, and to develop a critical understanding of the art of the print. I used components of Robert Yin’s prescription for case study for my research.

Yin’s blueprint for case study research is based on five components: a study’s questions, its propositions if any, unit analysis, linking data to propositions logically, and criteria for interpreting the findings. Those components, as applied in my study, are as follows (Yin, 1994):

Research Question

The overarching area of investigation is how students construct meaning through the discussion, analysis, and creation of art in a community workshop within the constraints of printmaking.

1. How do students construct meaning through understanding and applying the artistic constraints of printmaking?

2. How does the language and method of description, including interpretation and evaluation associated with art criticism, influence how students understand and discuss art; how do these conversations make the work more meaningful?
3. What is the relationship among technical skill, creativity, and personally meaningful expression?

4. How does learning with a focus on meaning as well as technical aspects of creating emotive marks influence student artistry and relationship with their work?

Hypotheses

1. By exploring what is personally meaningful as a basis for their artwork, students will understand more completely what they want the result to be, and be more invested in the final result.

2. Learning to critique art will provide students with a language of description and interpretation that will help them understand nuances, context and meaning within their own work and in the work of others.

3. The negative mark-making approach (carving out what will not be inked) of linocut print will provoke new understanding about creating images, and provide students with a shift in their approach to artmaking.

4. The printmaking process, especially the inability to undo a carved mark or paint over it will cause students to plan, anticipate results, and work with what they can’t change.

5. As students develop and apply technical skills, their work will come closer to their artistic plans. Through learning technique students will acquire the ability to better achieve desired results.

Preparation

In addition to preparing lesson plans, handouts, and materials, in the weeks before I began teaching the workshop, I also completed the exercises (as explained in the handouts) that I
have outlined for the workshop participants. I did this in order to assess the exercises I had prepared for the students in the workshop. Participating in the same artistic challenges informed how I taught and presented materials and was a valuable resource for me. For example, I found that by asking myself what was important or meaningful to me, I began looking at different subjects and images, then I would have if I had just grabbed a random image.

Although I wasn’t able to finish a print before the workshop, this exploration influenced my interactions with participants, how I shaped the class environment, and helped me interpret this process (Graham, 2009). Insight and information can be gained by doing the assignments we ask our students to do. Even if we have completed the tasks and gone through the thought processes in the past, new situations and encounters can greatly enhance our ability to guide students through the processes we’re teaching, as well as keeping it fresh in our mind. In order to better facilitate students in finding meaning in their work, I needed to do my own inquiries and share that with the students (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998).

**Location and Participants**

This case study was based on a six-week workshop that Kendali Studios scheduled for January and February of 2017. Kendali Studios is a private teaching studio in a middle-income neighborhood in Sandy, Utah. Most of the students who take classes at this art studio come to learn technique, to make a specific type of artwork, or simply because they enjoy the creative process of art making. This studio holds classes at varying times of the day, evening, or weekend for adults and public or homeschooled children and teens, and provides opportunities for full and partial tuition grants to students. This printmaking workshop was open to students aged 14 through adult. The youngest student was 14, the oldest 79, with other participants at various ages between. Discussions were brief and open-ended, to ensure that all students felt comfortable
participants regardless of their experience in academics, theory, or the history of art. The bulk of each class was hands-on, guiding the students through the mechanics of linocut relief printmaking step by step to complete their first print.

Participants who enrolled in this workshop have chosen to spend time in the visual arts; recognizing that, in some way, art improves their life. These students are, as described by Lawton; self-directed and engaged in the process of learning (Lawton & La Porte, 2013). Over the last several decades there has been increasing data showing the value of art in overall learning, and enriching lives. Regardless of individual background, age, or ability, the stimulus art provides lift personal barriers to success (Fiske, 1999).

**Methods of Data Collection**

Data consists of notes from direct observation of students during class. If I observed a behavior or comments that pertained to my research questions, those were written down. Conversations with students, or those between students were also noted if applicable. These conversations were made both during and out of class, but I did not see a need to note when they took place. I also made short videos of students during class for use in fulfilling my own assignments in classes I was taking for my Master’s Degree. These provided some of the quotes noted.

Student written responses were taken from the work sheets. The photos of students working as well as images of the process and student artwork provide visual data. Students seem to feel comfortable with the camera in the classroom, and when I expressed a desire to photograph their artwork for use in this thesis, they were happy to oblige. Because I didn’t think faces should be included for this case study, someone recommended that we shoot photos of
students holding their work. That was an ideal solution, as that gave an extra indication of the personal importance of this work.

Students answered a survey following conclusion of the course which is included in the appendix. All but one student completed the survey. It should be noted that the wording of the survey was designed to illicit responses that would pertain to specific research questions. In looking back on the survey and responses I now realize that some of my questions might have been too specific. Asking questions that were more open-ended might have been a better choice. Although they made not have given answers specific to research questions, they may have been more revealing, and provided new questions for future research.
Chapter 4 Curriculum

Teaching Philosophy

In Michael Schiro’s book, *Curriculum Theory*, he categorizes teaching philosophy into four areas: Scholar Academic, Social Efficiency, Learner Centered, and social Reconstruction. My ideology for this workshop is based on two of those areas; Learner Centered Teaching which focuses on the needs and concerns of the individual, and Scholar Academic Teaching which seeks to pass on knowledge to the student (Schiro, 2013).

Individuals seeking instruction of their own volition are focused on learning. They are choosing what, when, and where to learn. As a teacher, my responsibility is to let them take the lead, giving guidance when needed and assisting with discovery. When a student expresses interest in one direction or another, I have the opportunity to help them chart a path. These individuals are also engaged in learning the specifics of this medium, understanding the technique and learning to apply it. Teaching technical proficiency in the steps of making a completed relief print is essential in providing student a means for success in this workshop.

The bulk of instruction and presentations were given early in the workshop with students spending more time exploring concepts and results in later classes. This provides students early on with the necessary tools and information for creating art, which can be especially important with a new medium. It also allows for uninterrupted studio time as students take their projects in different directions. For example; lessons one, two, and three were taught on the first day of class. Lessons four and five were taught on the second day of class. Lesson six was taught and reiterated on the third and fourth day. Students were ready for lesson seven on the fifth day, and we wrapped things up and completed everything on the sixth day.
This course was taught in an environment in which grading and core standards are not required. The curriculum was designed to adapt to educational settings where grading and core standards were not required.

On the first day, and throughout the workshop, we viewed completed prints to see what meaning we could derive from woodcut prints and if our own approach to art could include terms of meaning as well as making a print with the desired results. In this workshop the focus was on meaning or self-expression within their prints. Hence, discussions of how to construct meaning and the importance of self-expression were an integral part of helping students assemble the pieces to construct their personal relief print. By planning ahead and identifying key points to be considered, those discussions were much more effective for the students.

I presented prints by a variety of artists and introduced the concept of meaning, especially in the nature of subject, mark-making and composition. Students were then given prompts for finding clues, sorting ideas for their art piece, discovering what meaning that image has for them and why they chose it. We followed the progress of their initial goals and intention throughout the process, and provided students the opportunity to summarize it upon completion (Szekely, 1985).

To help students see how composition factors into meaning, we viewed images of contemporary and historic prints that were similar in size and method to what they would be making. Each student marked the focal point, noted what was appealing or distracting, what emotion they saw, their reaction, and what types of lines or shapes were in the composition. In this way, each student came to their own conclusions through action (see Appendix A; Visual Clues worksheet). Students also looked at marks made by other artists and analyzed what contribution they make to the overall piece (Appendix C; Mark Making worksheet).
In deciding upon the subject of their piece, students were sent on a quest to identify what had personal meaning to them (Appendix B; Puzzling it out…where do I start?). They designed their project and described the characteristics they wanted them to contain (Appendix D; Your Design worksheet). Technical information about laying out the image and carving, as well as design principles were also provided (Appendix E; Keep in Mind…, and Appendix F; Executing Your Print).

A Curriculum Development Storyboard is provided to visually link questions, concepts, rationale, learning goals, objectives, and weekly lessons. In this way I was able to ensure that I was planning for, and acting on all the research questions throughout the workshop. That storyboard along with the curriculum are included in the following pages. The printmaking terms and items used for the workshop are also provided. Lesson plans and images used in the workshop will also be included digitally.
Curriculum Development Storyboard

**Personal Puzzles: Constructing Meaning through the technique of Printmaking**

**Enduring Theme**
- Constructing meaning and creativity through technique.

**Rationale**
- When creating art is personally meaningful, it expands our lives, shares culture, and we imagine possibilities (Glezer, 2002).
- Serious, thoughtful discussion about art provides insight and engagement, and improves student art making (Gunn, 1997).
- Artwork is made by thinking about it as well as physically working on it (Suzuki, 1992).
- Creating balance between symbolic expression and disciplined craftsmanship (Annes, 1994).

**Knowledge Base**
- Artwork by Emilie Nocito, Kathie Kolteitz, Albro Scheurline, William Morris, and others.
- Printmaking practices in relief historically and new practices and materials.
- Artistic conventions, use of principles and elements of art.

**Important Concepts**
- Meaning, context, and art.
- The language and methods of art criticism.
- Thought process and creativity.
- Printmaking techniques.

**Research Questions**
- What are the ways students construct meaning through artistic constraints of printmaking?
- How does the language and method of description, interpretation, and evaluation of art criticism influence how students understand and discuss art; how do these conversations make the work more meaningful?
- What is the relationship among technical skill, creativity, and personally meaningful expression?
- How does learning with focus on meaning as well as technical aspects of creating emotive marks influence student attitude and relationship with their work?

**Learning Goals** Following the lessons students should be able to:
- Construct art within a personal context, combining visual imagery that they may not have explored as self-expression. 01, 04.
- Provide a context for describing, interpreting, and evaluating relief prints and analyzing their own art work completed and in progress. 02.
- Participate in meaningful discussion, individual tasks, and contribute to a receptive classroom environment where all can think about, explore, and share ideas. 01, 02, 04.
- Have the technical means to achieve the finished product in a way that reflects their intention and meaning. 01, 03, 04.

**Learning Experiments**

**Learning Objective B**
- Introduction relief prints (current & historical).

- Discussion
  - Interest, emotion, story, artist intent, focus, eye movement.

- **Learning Activity**
  - Foil-point Worksheet.

- **Learning Objective D**
  - Relief materials.

- Discussion
  - Depth, inking, printmaking terms.

- **Learning Activity**
  - Practice with synchroform and letter blocks.

- **Learning Objective A**
  - Where to start?

- **Learning Activity**
  - Puzzling it out worksheet.

**Learning Objective C**
- Weeks two relief print slides & prints.

- **Learning Activity**

- **Learning Objective D**
  - Transfer composition, placement, carving. Execute Print handout.

- **Learning Activity**
  - Tracing paper transfer, carving techniques. Types of cuts. First half of Design worksheet.

**Learning Objective C**
- Tearing paper, Test Print

- **Learning Activity**
  - Accuracy, uses, folding. Specifics of ink method, cleanup.

- **Learning Objective B**
  - Proven paper for test print. Print test on two types of paper.

- **Learning Objective B**
  - Test print, effects of mark making.

- **Learning Activity**
  - Describe and evaluate, problem solving.

- **Learning Objective D**
  - Second half of Your Design worksheet.

**Learning Objective C**
- Describe and evaluate, problem solving.

- **Learning Activity**
  - Choosing color. Apply to test print.

**Learning Objective C**
- Develop block

- **Learning Activity**
  - Describe and evaluate. Problem solving.

- **Learning Objective B**
  - Self Evaluation

**Learning Objective C**
- Choose color.

- **Learning Activity**
  - Evaluating worksheet.

- **Learning Objective D**
  - Testing your print.

- **Learning Activity**
  - Change your opinion?

- **Learning Objective D**
  - Float print and frame.

**Measurable Student Responses**
- Draw or transfer their composition onto lino block in a way that makes it easy to print from.
- Use descriptive terms to evaluate relief print for their reactions to it and the qualities of mark making they see.
- Find the emphasis or focal point in a relief print.
- Participate in class critiques in an informative and constructive manner.
- Make marks with pen marker that explore different mood or emotion. 
- Make the equipment when finished using it.
- Draw or transfer their composition onto lino block in a way that makes it easy to print from.
- Use a carving tool in a safe manner.
- Use a carving tool to make emotive marks.
- Prepare paper, roll ink, and transfer image from block to paper.
- **Students will complete one or more prints and critique their own and other's work.**
Lesson One: Visual Relief Print Introduction

**Lesson Intro**
Relief print has been in practice for centuries. We will be focusing on its use as an artistic medium of expression.

**Materials**
Introduction slides – an overview of early to contemporary prints.
Visual Clues worksheet (Appendix A)

**Artist / Reference**
Various artists, well-known and unknown. Images found online can bring current artists into discussion

**Questions**
What do you find interesting?
Is it enough to say, “I like it”, or can we elaborate on why/how we like it, or what “like” means?
Do you see any emotion or story?
What do you think the artist had in mind when doing this?
How does your eye travel through the print?
What catches your attention first? Second?
Is there a common thread?
Could that be why we have certain “rules” for art/composition?

**Learning Outcomes**
The student will investigate historical through contemporary art prints and motivation.

The student will examine slides of prints and make their own compositional conclusions, which can then be compared if desired.

The student will have the opportunity to independently look at original relief prints or Relief Books. These can be made available for students to thumb through before or after class, or during breaks.

Students will apply tools of description and analyzing art work to critically evaluate their own art, both completed and in-progress.

Students will participate in meaningful discussion, individual tasks, and contribute to a receptive classroom environment where all can think about, explore, and share ideas.

**Activities**
Slide show: Show students prints from early relief wood blocks through modern linocut. Discuss what they see, giving students background for artist’s environment, such as political shifts, new technology like the printing press, etc.

Class Discussion: After students have completed Focal Point/Emphasis worksheet, discuss their findings.

Observation: During discussion or observation students assess their ability to describe qualities of a print in whole or part.
Lesson Two: Tactile Nature of Relief Print

**Lesson Intro**
By giving the students the opportunity to quickly see the impact of impressions made in styrofoam on a print, and the reverse image that appears, students are able to quickly experience the process from beginning to end. Experiencing the complete process will enable students to understand the cause/effect of each step.

**Materials**
Completed lino block
Paper cut to size
Ink
Brayers
Burins
Newsprint/scrap paper
Clean up supplies
Styrofoam blocks (may be cut from plates)
Random objects or tools for making impressions in styrofoam

**Questions**
How deep do marks need to be to show up in the print?
Does every little indent show?
Does it take a lot of pressure or a little on the brayer and barren?
Does thickness of ink matter?
What is the difference between stamping and printing?
Can there be artistry in the process of printing as well as in designing or carving?

**Learning Outcomes**
The student will use a styrofoam block to make an image from which they will then print.
The student will handle and use a carved lino block to make a block print using a brayer to apply ink, and a burin to transfer the image to paper.
Participate in meaningful discussion, individual tasks, and contribute to a receptive classroom environment where all can think about, explore, and share ideas.
Students will apply technical printmaking skills to their own work in a way that reflects their intention or meaning.

**Activities**
Class Discussion: Engage students in discussion of the process while they’re doing each step.
Observation: Assess the students’ first exposure to relief printing using roller and ink. Understanding or frustration and lack of understanding of the process will guide future instruction.
Lesson Three: Puzzling It Out

Lesson Intro
Beginning a project, or finding a subject/inspiration can be very difficult. Providing students with a starting point for recognizing subjects that are personally relevant can open new avenues for students.

Materials
Puzzling it Out Worksheet
(Appendix B)

Artist / Reference
It may be helpful to show a few small artworks similar in size and with the types of marks students will be able to make with tools available.

Questions
If you choose to use an object photocopy instead of drawing it, is that “cheating,” or just a different approach?

Do I have to have a strong feeling/opinion about my subject?

Do I need to understand why I’m drawn to something before I start, or can that be part of the process?

Does personal meaning make a difference to an art piece? To an artist? To the viewer?

Learning Outcomes
The student will explore areas of personal interest, answering questions and observing things around them. Then glean from them possibilities for subject of their print, whether abstract or representational.

The student will verbally explore possibilities of visual representation, such as using a drawing, photograph, object photocopy, Dada, collage, etc., then choose what most suits their needs.

Construct art within a personal context, combining visual imagery they may not have explored as self-expression.

Participate in meaningful discussion, individual tasks, and contribute to a receptive classroom environment where all can think about, explore, and share ideas.

Activities
Class Discussion: Have the students engage in a discussion of whether or not meaning, by the artist or the viewer, is important in a print.

Sketchbook: Give the students the Puzzling It Out worksheet, and have them discuss possibilities for discovering subjects. Teacher assessment will be geared towards helping students see unexplored ideas.
Lesson Four: Mark-Making

Lesson Intro
The types of marks made in Relief carving contribute greatly to the final print. Learning to watch for and evaluate those marks enable students to adapt skills and methods for carving.

Materials
Mark-Making worksheet
(Appendix C)
Your Design worksheet
(Appendix D)
Composition Poster

Artist / Reference
Albrecht Dürer, Emile Nolde, Kathe Kollwitz, and William Morris.

Additional slides or prints with similar approach or subjects as students (pattern, portrait, landscape, etc.)

Questions
How do the marks contribute to the artist’s message, the composition, visual description of subject?

Do these marks affect your personal reaction?

Can you sense the emotion or physical movement of the artist through the marks?

Learning Outcomes
The student will investigate the marks made by master printmakers and how it contributes to the whole (subject, composition, artist’s message, personal reaction, etc.). Describe the type of marks and vary their own marks through sketchbook samples using Mark-Making worksheet (or scrap paper).

Students will complete Your Design – Now What worksheet and apply the mark-making information to several versions of their own block design using broad tip or chisel markers to mimic the carving marks.

Using the information gleaned about marks and the relation to the final print, the student will apply the type of marks to their own print design.

Learning Goals
Provide a context for describing, interpreting, and evaluating relief prints and analyzing their own art completed and in-progress art.

Participate in meaningful discussion, individual tasks, and contribute to a receptive classroom environment where all can think about, explore, and share ideas.

Have the technical means to achieve the finished product in a way that reflects their intention / meaning.

Assessments
Slide Show / Sketchbook / Discussion: As slides are viewed and sketched, discuss they type of marks and their contribution to the art.

Observation: As students compose their layout/design Teacher will assess the composition and marks discussed earlier.

Small Group Discussion: Have the students assess/critique the design in pairs or groups to see if results meet with artist’s goal and give each other feedback.
Lesson Five: Working in Reverse

Lesson Intro
Because of the nature of relief print, the bulk of time is spent working on a reverse image from the final print. Learning to navigate that throughout the process is vital.

Materials
Keep in Mind Handout (Appendix E)
Executing Your Print (Appendix F)
Tracing Paper
Pencil (B or darker)
Mirror
Lino block
Sharpie / marker

Artist / Reference
Slides or blocks and correlating prints placed side by side

Questions
What are advantages/disadvantages of drawing directly on the block versus transferring the reverse image or using transfer paper?

How does tilting my head or paper affect my initial drawing?

How can a mirror help me recognize skew or disproportion?

Learning Outcomes
The student will learn how to reverse their design using tracing paper to transfer it to the block (after drawing the image with a bold pencil on tracing paper, place it face down on the block and burnish it to transfer the image in reverse so the print will be the same orientation as the drawing), or using a mirror if designing directly on the block, or using transfer paper.

Students will learn how to fit their design to the block to allow for a bleed, a border, or a full block design in the print.

Students will transfer their created image to a carving block in preparation for carving, then refine the types of marks planned using a sharpie if possible.

Participate in meaningful discussion, individual tasks, and contribute to a receptive classroom environment where all can think about, explore, and share ideas.

Have the technical means to achieve the finished product in a way that reflects their intention / meaning.

Activities
Slide Show or Hands-on: Show student examples of blocks and prints side by side. Include examples of prints with words or letters, done correctly and backwards to increase their understanding. Discuss how perception can change in a reversed, skewing or distortion, designs that can work either way.

Observation: While students transfer or draw their image on the block, assess the feasibility of their approach and what results may be for final print.
Lesson Six: In-Progress and Final Printing

Lesson Intro
Holding tools to achieve desired result and prevent injury during process should be the first step in carving. Evaluating the print as the block is being carved can lead the student artist in new directions and give them opportunity to solve issues early.

Materials
- Lino block
- Carving tools
- Bench hook
- Whetstone/sharpener
- Leather strop
- Scrap paper or newsprint
- Various printmaking papers
- Ink
- Putty knife
- Brayers
- Burins
- Cleanup equipment

References
See *Terms and Items Used* at the end of this chapter for more complete explanation of items used and context.

Learning Outcomes
The student will carve their block in a manner safe for themselves and others, stopping at any point if they are unsure of how they want to proceed in order to print a state proof or in-progress print. Students will complete the mid-project evaluation portion of *Your Design – Now What* worksheet.

Students will learn to tear and/or cut paper to proper size, properties and consistency of ink, and how to roll the palette and block, use of burin to transfer image, registration of paper, and proper cleanup and safety.

Student will make several final prints and sign them.

Construct art within a personal context, combining visual imagery they may not have explored as self-expression.

Provide a context for describing, interpreting, and evaluating relief prints and analyzing their own art completed and in-progress art.

Participate in meaningful discussion, individual tasks, and contribute to a receptive classroom environment where all can think about, explore, and share ideas.

Have the technical means to achieve the finished product in a way that reflects their intention/meaning.

Activities
Class discussion: Have the students engage in a mid-project critique to assess, encourage, and brainstorm possibilities for changes as well as causes for problems in print (poor transfer, incomplete image, etc.).

Sketchbook: The teacher will assess the student’s final print with regard to intention, effectiveness of design/marks, attentions to detail, and mastery of mechanics of print.
Lesson Seven: Adding Color

Lesson Intro
There are many ways to use color in printmaking. Adding color to each print is perhaps the simplest of these.

Materials
Final print
Watercolor or other medium (appropriate for type of paper printed on)

Learning Outcomes
The student will add color to a test print using a wash, direct painting, or localized color. They will then decide if the result will contribute or detract from their intention for that print.

Construct art within a personal context, combining visual imagery they may not have explored as self-expression.

Provide a context for describing, interpreting, and evaluating relief prints and analyzing their own art completed and in-progress art.

Participate in meaningful discussion, individual tasks, and contribute to a receptive classroom environment where all can think about, explore, and share ideas.

Have the technical means to achieve the finished product in a way that reflects their intention/meaning.

Activities
Observation/discussion: Have the students engage in a discussion of their final print with and without color and the merits of each.
Terms and Items Used

**Bench hook** – Designed to keep the block stable while carving, this is a flat surface with a lip on the underside at the front and the upper side at the back. When rested against the table edge it keeps the block in place while carving. Made of metal or wood, these can be purchased of made from thin plywood and ¼ inch molding. A small piece of no-skid shelf liner is a great addition.

**Bleed** – If students want their print to bleed, or encompass the entire paper, they will need to cut or tear paper smaller than the size of block carving.

**Border** – If students want a border on their print, for best results leave a border on the block and cut or tear paper the same size as the block. This makes it easy to register the paper since it is simply aligned with the block edges. Another possibility is to carve the entire block then print it on paper that is larger, but the same proportion as the block, leaving a border. This is more difficult to register and will also emboss the edges of the block in the paper.

**Brayer** – A soft rubber roller with a handle used for rolling ink on the palette and then transferring to the block. The soft rubber is still relatively firm and easy for students to use. Those that come apart for cleaning work great – if they don’t easily separate while rolling ink.

**Burin** – This is used to press the paper onto the block for ink transfer. Traditional Japanese burins are made using bamboo leaves, but can be wood or metal. These can be purchased, but can also be made. Class favorites include a large wooden doorknob, wooden spoon, small portion of balustrade, and the overall favorite: the top four inches of baseball bat.

**Carving Tool** – Either linocut tools or woodcut tools can be used. I found Linocut tools to be less expensive and when they come with several blades that store in the handle very easy for students to transport to and from class with no chance of injury. Because they are less expensive they are also of cheaper quality so I checked each for sharp and straight blades before giving to students.

**Dark/Soft Pencils** – With my hand pressure a B pencil will transfer well onto the block, but those with a lighter touch may prefer a 4B or softer.

**Ink** – Although I use an oil based ink that requires a solvent cleanup in my own studio, a water-soluble ink was needed for classroom use. After trying several, many of which dried too quickly and required palette clean up and wasting of ink every 15 minutes, I found that Speedball Professional Relief Ink was a great choice. It is an oil-based ink with that is water-miscible so it is easy to clean up with no solvent required, and gave us plenty of working time. The texture and consistency was great and needed no modifiers. Other brands of oil-based, water-miscible inks would likely do well.

**Leather Strop** – Just as the old barbers kept their tool sharp, a piece of leather glued to an angled piece of wood will keep the tool sharp by keeping it free of burrs at the cutting edge. Tool is pulled, not pushed, to clean the blades edge. Use the sharp corner for inside of U or V gauge. Works best with a polishing compound or rosin. Strops can be made or purchased, both work well.

**Lino Block** – Traditional linoleum can be mounted on blocks or unmounted, and purchased from art stores or even flooring stores. The favorite of my students was the soft cut lino blocks that are really more rubber than lino. They are flexible and cut like butter. They come in several colors depending on the brand. Gently wiping the surface of whatever type block you use with a contrasting color of ink or paint
to stain it (not leave a thick layer) will make it easy to see where you’ve carved. There is a clear relief block, but we did not find it useful. Although it would seem to make it easier to not have to transfer the image, just to tape the block on top and carve, it’s difficult to see where you have carved or discern the top surface from the bottom surface.

**Metal Ruler** – I use them for tearing paper edges as well as measuring. Two precautions: Triple clean the edges until no marks come off on cleaning cloth or it will leave a line on the paper. If your ruler has a cork surface on back, place it upside-down on paper to make tearing easier and more accurate. Heavy metal yardsticks can be less expensive at discount hardware stores.

**Mirror** – Often used by painters for checking proportions, this will enable you to see what the orientation of the final print will be. Great for catching things that won’t look right in the final print.

**Newsprint** – Used as blotter to catch spills, as a buffer between print paper and burin, and a great state proof (in-progress) paper. Old phone books are also made from newsprint-type paper and work great for holding block while inking and wiping putty knife.

**Palette** – A piece of tempered glass or smooth plastic or metal works well. A larger 12x20 sheet will allow a user on each side of the table access.

**Photocopy Method** – Actual objects can be place on a copy machine to get an interesting view of three-dimensional object easily place in two-dimensional form.

**Printmaking Paper** – There are many types of printmaking paper. My students found it useful to try a couple variations. Sturdy cotton paper such as Rives BFK, is also great when tinting with watercolor. It holds up well and works with a cut or torn edge. A lighter paper such as mulberry gives a softer look and is very different to print with. Students enjoyed both of these papers for different applications, and printed the same block on each with pleasing, but differing, results.

**Putty Knife** – A 1.5–2 inch putty knife will allow you to spread the ink in a thin layer at one end of the palette to make it easier to retrieve with the roller and not make big globs. If your ink comes in a tin you can pull ink out of tin in layers instead of gouging it out. If using more than just black to print with, use one putty knife for each color. I teach my students there are five surfaces on a putty knife to clean, not just the top and bottom – a lot of ink hides on those thin edges!

**Register** – To align the paper with the carved block for printing. Fairly simple when only using one block, and if students are using a small block with a larger paper you teach them to make a registration outline on newsprint to assist them. If printing with two or more blocks to make the same print is more complex, but I did not go into detail with those methods.

**Sharpening Tool** – If you have access to a round or triangle metal file it will be easier to sharpen inner edges of U and V gouges.

**Sharpie/Marker** – After transferring or drawing design on the block, defining it with the bold or chisel point sharpie helps students mimic the kind of marks and the direction of carving they will be making with the carving tool. If they need to rework the block because they don’t like the design, the marker can be removed with alcohol. Because it is waterproof, the design does not completely disappear after making a state (in-progress) proof so they don’t need to either re-draw or transfer after rinsing ink off.
State Proof – A print pulled from a block or blocks during the process of carving, before completion of blocks for final print.

Tearing – A traditional method for re-sizing paper, it leaves a rough edge similar to the natural deckle edge formed when paper is made. I gave students option of both tearing and cutting paper for their print.

Tracing Paper – When choosing a tracing paper, I place an image with a lot of detail or even something with small type beneath a single sheet and compare them. Not all tracing paper is equal, and some tracing paper is difficult to see through! The beauty of using tracing paper is that drawings erase cleanly, and can even be cut apart and re-arranged because it is thin enough to see the layers. It transfers easily to the lino block using edge of a spoon or even thumbnail because it is thin.

Transfer Paper – Transfer paper is placed beneath a drawing, and then the drawing is traced to put the image on the block. It can be purchased in black, white or colors, or even made with a sheet of tracing paper and a 2B pencil. Although I like this for other applications since it erases if needed, it doesn’t reverse the image before carving so print will be reverse of the drawing.

Whetstone – A stone used with oil to sharpen a blade. I rarely need to use this or the sharpening tool if I use the strop every 10-15 minutes of carving.
Chapter 5 Results and Analysis

Results

Each of the research questions are highlighted below, followed by observations and answers to the survey that are relevant to that question. Although the questions posed may have concerned one research question, some responses overlap into others. Conversations and student responses are anonymous.

1 – How do students construct meaning through understanding and applying the artistic constraints of printmaking?

Observation: On the first day of class, as we looked at slides and prints, students appeared to be formulating ideas for prints. I could see a few notes being jotted down and a comment about wanting to do a portrait. Later, after we began talking about meaning by the artist for the work we were viewing, the students began to see strong emotion in some of the pieces, particularly in the work of Kathe Kollwitz which is concerned with the effects of war on individuals. When I introduced the worksheet on personal meaning, and finding what is important to each student individually, there appeared to be an interruption in the thought process for many of them. It seemed to me as if they needed to shift from interpreting completed works of art to how one would start creating a work of art. As they worked through the questions and began writing or telling me what they were thinking and why, it appeared that they became increasingly confident in their choice of subject. For subject matter, students chose personal experiences, pets dear to family, and images relating to hobbies. One or two students chose to do something that was simply visually appealing with no explanation of personal meaning given.

After exploring possibilities for subjects, several students brought in photos they had taken, selecting specific experiences depicted in the photographs. One student described a scene
from a story he was writing, and we began adapting found images to illustrate it. Another student brought in personal sketches, trying to illustrate an emotional bond with animals. A few students also chose animals purely for the design aspect they were drawn to.

Later, as we discussed the types of marks and the effect they might have on the print, students began assigning types of marks to define different areas. Most thought long horizontal lines were best used to depict distance, calmness, and serenity. Diagonal, jagged, or swirl marks were thought best used for active emotion and to define subject from background. Attempts were made by the students to use a variety of marks in relation to their subject and goal.

Survey question: Did you find any new ways of self-expression in this course in creating art or looking for subject matter?

- “Definitely! The handouts you gave really helped me pick subject matter that meant something!”
- “Yes. This was a fun way to create a piece of art by carving on a vinyl block.”
- “I found a new way to look at positive and negative space when planning a piece of art. I learned more about texture and the flow of lines. This medium forced me to think hard when planning on what to do because I think it requires a specific kind of subject that lends itself to the graphic nature of it.”
- “I found new ways to express art, in the fact that I've never done this type of art before.”
- “YES”
- “Yes, I did. It was a whole different medium than I've used before and it made me look at things totally differently, thus expressing myself differently.”
“I was pleased to be able to carve a block of the deer I photographed in my back yard!

Also, I was able to make a print block of my 1952 Ford tractor that I restored.”

2 - How does the language and method of description, including interpretation and evaluation associated with art criticism, influence how students understand and discuss art; how do these conversations make the work more meaningful?

Observation: As we began discussing the art we viewed, some students readily used terms associated with art and design, and seemed to feel at ease. Others were hesitant about using unfamiliar words, and would often describe their interpretation as a question more than a statement (“Maybe, calm?”, etc.). As we progressed through the workshop, students used these terms, and types of questions more and more in reference to their own and others’ work. One shy student remained very hesitant about speaking or revealing his interpretations, but seemed to appreciate and understand the application of art critique from others. Each student was able to explain their choices of either subject of marks and why they went in that direction.

There appeared to be a greater interest and appreciation for the prints viewed as we neared the end of our class than at the beginning. When students began to interpret and vocalize what they were seeing, they began to reverse that process and vocalize what they wanted to achieve and how that could be interpreted through mark-making and composition.

Survey question: Do you feel you have learned any vocabulary or analysis methods that will help you in evaluating art, whether completed or in-progress?

- “I learned new terms, I explored new ideas with others during several discussions, and I learned the technical skill of carving.”
• “Value was a big component of my piece it was a little difficult to see the slight value changes that brought the piece to life. Sally was very helpful in making this work for me. Her eye is very keen on light and shadow.”

• “I learned new vocabulary and it reinforced what I had learned before in the art and design world. That in turn helps me understand what a certain artist had in mind or what I need to keep in mind for my own pieces.”

• “Yes. I learned a lot of vocabulary and analysis methods that will help me with my own art and with understanding others.”

• “yes”

• “Yes, I learned some new words having to do with print making!”

3 - **What is the relationship between technical skill, creativity, and personally meaningful expression?**

   Observation: I’ve often observed students being thwarted in their creative efforts by lack of ability or “how”. Relief print is no exception. One student was very frustrated because it did not look the way she was envisioning it. After further explanation of what her goal was, and specifics and what effect and type of mark she wanted for that area, she still could not get what she wanted. After physically making the type of marks and showing her how my body, hands, tool, and block setup could make those marks, she was then able to achieve what she was after.

   Some students brought their work to a higher level of aesthetics than they thought they could through learning techniques and specific mark-making – they were able to produce something better than they anticipated or had done before. Other students adjusted their image and goal according to the marks they could make. Much of our class time was spent answering the *how* and *why* questions to me as an instructor, and to each other, such as: how did you make
that mark or spread ink evenly? Why did I get this result? Why did you choose that paper? When students tried to get their creative ideas on to block or paper they wanted to learn the technical skills that would achieve the results they were looking for.

Survey question: Were you able to learn the technical skills (carving, printing, etc.) to complete your finished product as you intended?

• “Yes! Sally explained so clearly that it would be hard not to get it”

• “Yes. Thanks for a great new way to express myself. Very meditative.”

• “I learned the skills and I was able to complete my carving and print. With feedback, I was able to make necessary changes to make my carving a success and just how I wanted it.”

• “Yes!”

• “I am looking forward to using the lessons I learned to make additional carvings.”

• “Absolutely! Sally provided a carving stand that helped hold the tile in place and really made a difference! It was wonderful!”

• “My instructor was very helpful in teaching methods in putting ideas I had in print for someone else to see.”

4 - How does learning with a focus on meaning as well as technical aspects of creating emotive marks influence student artistry and relationship with their work?

Observation: As we focused on intent of the student artist, that goal helped the students re-adjust in order to keep going in the direction of their focus. By seeing the way other students interpreted their intent or emotion they were better able to adapt methods and marks to their own
work. The reaction of other students to their work in progress also helped them see if they were achieving their intent.

Each student related to their work on a different level. Those who based their work on something with personal meaning seemed to reinforce that as they went through each step of composing, making marks, and printing. Those who were more random in their choices seemed to go through each of the same steps with less concern for whether or not the outcome achieved a certain goal. All students appeared to enjoy the class in some way, whether it was the planning aspect, creating the layout, mechanics of printmaking or carving, or the result of their work.

**Responses of individual class members to the workshop as a whole:**

Quotes: These comments were made during class:

- “This has opened a window to a whole new world for me!”
- “Thank you for the awesome class. I am in love with this medium. I can't wait to plan my next block.”

*Survey question: Was the class environment open to your own exploration and sharing ideas? Were discussions meaningful or helpful?*

- “Yes. It felt like a very creative space with which to carve and print. I really enjoyed everyone's ideas and opinions on their own art and on other's art. It was a lot of fun!”
- “Environment was very friendly and shared opinions about each other's art was positive and helpful.”
- “I felt completely open to exploration. We looked at so many different examples which helped inspire me and challenge me to find or try something new.”
- “yes, yes.”
• “It was very fun class as we as students shared ideas and discussions of our work.”

• “It was totally open for me to go in any direction I wanted, I enjoyed the discussion and critiques. They helped me know which direction to go.”

Survey questions: Do you have any other comments about any part of the workshop?

• “Do another one! I enjoyed learning about the history of printmaking and its techniques!”

• “I loved this workshop. I'm so glad I attended and was able to expand my artwork into this medium. Sally is a fantastic teacher. I would happily attend any class she would teach.”

• “It was very interesting. I enjoyed it much.”

• “would like to continue learning about relief printing”

• “I think this was a wonderful workshop. Sally was friendly, informative, and really fun to work with!”

• “Thanks Sally Rydalch for your interest in my successful completion of my projects!”

Additional Observations and Data Analysis

This case study concerns the ways students construct meaning through the printmaking process, how art criticism language influence student understanding and discussion, the relationship between technical skill and creativity, and how learning with a focus on artist’s intent as well as technical aspects of printmaking influence student artistry and their relationship with their work. An overall observation and analysis of the results follow.

During the workshop, I made observations to assess how well students were understanding certain concepts or responding to activities. These assessments correlate to
Research Questions (Q1, Q2, etc) and to Measurable Objectives (1,2,3…) on the Curriculum Development Storyboard (pg. 28).

At the beginning of the workshop, slides of woodcut prints by old masters and new artists were shown to students. We discussed what they saw, how it made them feel, what intrigued them, as well as what drew their eye and how they moved through the print. Instead of just saying “I like it” can we elaborate? This was their introduction to woodcut prints and some of the possibilities they could explore. Students gave voice to their reactions which mostly centered around emotion or action. Phrases like, “that feels so sad”, “full of emotion”, “joyful”, “playful”, “energetic”, “it’s very calm” were used.

Discussion concerning the mood sensed and if there was a relation to the marks for that piece followed. I asked: was there anything in the placement of images or focal points that contributed to the emotion of the print? Is the composition a supporting factor for the overall piece? Student consensus was that composition and focal point were as integral as the carving.

Figure 3. Completed Focal Point Worksheets. An example of two students’ indication of emphasis, mood, and their own reaction to the print.
marks in what the piece “felt” like. As discussion continued students realized that there were differing reactions, and that as a viewer they were in a way participating in the art through their reactions and commentary, which could be very different.

Following the slides, each student was given a reproduction of four prints and asked to identify the focal point, any area they were especially drawn to, if they felt it had an emotion or energy, and any other comments. We had just done some of this with the slides, so descriptive phrases and descriptions of compositional terms were fresh in their memory. This was done on an individual level so that students would feel free to react without being concerned with what others thought. Some students were a bit tentative naming aloud compositional or emotive response, so as I gave them the paper to write or show their opinion of the prints, I invited them to show me what they found only if they wanted. Those that wanted to show me their papers found things in the print they hadn’t initially seen, or immediate reactions such as “Wow!”, “feels stiff”. One or two students asked for assistance: “Is this what you mean, is that the focal point?” I helped the student understand what the term meant, and that there isn’t a right or wrong answer, but it is what they see, their view. The remaining questions on the form were also entirely their own. Knowing they didn’t have to have it “right” seemed to put them at ease.

Our discussion included what inspired some of the artist’s work we viewed, and where

Figure 4. Completed Puzzling It Out worksheet. A few thoughts on my own exploration of personal meaning.
we look for inspiration. The Internet was brought up, some saying they just looked for something they liked. Others brought up that they took their own photographs to draw or paint from. Some said they thought deciding what to base artwork on was the hardest part. As the class ended I gave each student the *Puzzling it out – Where do I start!?* worksheet to take home and see if it would help them come up with ideas.

We began the next class with discussion of the worksheet they had just completed. Many said it was a different way to approach their artwork, and it gave them some new ideas, or reminded them of something from the past they would like to use, usually a photograph. For many in the group, some things couldn’t be described in words on the worksheet. As student brought things forward and we began discussing images, I was reminded of how art can be its own language, expressing concepts difficult to describe with words.

One person was spending time writing stories and wanted to illustrate a specific scene he had sketched. Another brought photos of a family pet that had passed. There was an image of an elderly woman someone had met while serving at a retirement home, and forged a bond...
with. The deer that came from the foothills into one man’s yard were a priority for him, as well as an antique tractor he had restored. Some brought images of experiences; the view of a forest fire from a distance, seeing flamingos in the wild. Some just wanted to carve something fun and interesting, choosing patterns that were intriguing. That sparked another discussion, that sometimes we do art for pure enjoyment, for stress relief, or to make something useful, or just an entertaining image.

Because this group of students had such a wide range of age and experience, letting each person provide the direction for their work was key. Discussions of what ideas they had thought of opened dialogue and interaction. The individual differences of personal meaning, became common ground. It was a joy to see our oldest and youngest working together and helping each other work out problems. Each student valued others ideas and opinions, I think, because they could see the personal value.

As students sketched their ideas out, they decided what would work with the size of the block, and see how they could include some things but leave out others. We discussed using photographs and using imagination. In one
instance, we resorted to the internet to find out what a knight in a cloak looked like so that it could be adapted to illustrate the story scene. For the portrait, I pulled up several woodcut portraits for inspiration and mark-making ideas. Those by Neil Shigley proved to be key for this student, both in appearance of image and intent of the artist.

Most students decided to draw their design out on tracing paper, taking care to plan and place objects. Students held tracing paper up in reverse to see what the final print would look like. Once or twice (usually when the image was lighthearted or just for “fun”) a student felt comfortable drawing directly on lino. Because the image gets reversed in the print, that did cause some re-working. For example, the tractor image, once printed, would have had the carburetor or certain engine parts on the wrong side, so that need to be reworked before carving began. In several instances the reversal was forgotten until the print stage, but was accepted as satisfactory anyway.

As part of getting the block ready, students also tried out marks with a sharpie on paper to see if it gave the impression they wanted for their print. We discussed how fine

Figure 10. Student experimenting with types of marks for elements in her block.

Figure 11. Student response to Your Design - Now What Worksheet.
details of the carving marks came through on the print, and that they showed more than many of the students thought they would. Because students had made a quick print using a styrofoam block and saw how the intentional marks they made as well as unintentional marks transferred, they realized trying different types of marks on paper would help them before they carved into the block that couldn’t be uncarved.

I placed carved blocks and prints out for students, and pulled up slides we had previously seen for them to see the different marks. Types of marks used were discussed, how they thought marks were made, and what students thought they expressed. Students also came to the conclusion that some marks were very similar from one print to the next, but it was the combination of marks as well as the proportion of light or dark that brought different emotion to the print. Students copied a few marks they thought were expressive. They then began to try to make different types of marks that might be useful for their print. Afterward they described the mark. Some students commented that what they were trying to express with certain marks “didn’t work”, and that it was harder than they thought just to try to figure out how to make different types of marks.

Students then began to decide what marks to use on their print in different areas. They assigned marks to define or...
communicate emotion, distinguish objects and emphasize focal points. I asked students to describe what they were trying to achieve with their print. By writing this down, they could then come back to their paper and see if they were achieving their goal for the print, if the goal had changed, or if they wanted to change some aspects of the carving to guide the print closer to the intent.

Students transferred the image to the block and begin carving. Learning how to make the marks with a carving tool instead of a marker was difficult for some marks. Often students would practice making marks on another block or in the margin, apprehensive of making the first cut into the block. Learning how to safely carve, as well as making a mark curve were the first hurdles encountered. Students soon began asking me how to make marks and which tip to use. They also helped each other. If someone found success, they shared the technique. Having a bench hook for each student helped greatly to keep them from injury so the block would be stable and fingers kept out of the way.

The type of block used also contributed to what marks could be made. I had a linoleum block, an ABS plastic block, transparent blocks, and soft blocks available. With different types of blocks available, students began experimenting with ease of carving, and the effect of different blades on the blocks. One student tried the same design with slight variations on two different kinds of blocks to see how she could carve it and what the effect would be on the print. At this point she made the comment, “This has opened a window to a whole new world for me!” It wasn’t the finished print that appealed to her – we hadn’t gotten that far – it was the

![Figure 14. Written portion of student's mid-project analysis.](image-url)
process. That day we also discussed the tactile nature of a block print, and that making something with your hands “felt good”.

At this point we reviewed the process of rolling ink to make a state proof, paper tearing, registration, cleanup, etc. I encouraged all the students to pull a print from their partially carved block and let them know that this process of pulling a state proof was a common practice among printmakers. This print would let them see if the marks were transferring the way they thought they would, and also help give them additional feedback from the group. This was a class with a very positive energy, and feedback was honest and encouraging. It was also important to me that every student had the opportunity to give and receive feedback for their work. One student did not finish his block until a few weeks after the workshop ended, so doing an in-progress critique was his only opportunity to receive feedback from class members.

We also put all the in-progress blocks up to see what the carving looked like. Students gave each other feedback through encouragement for efforts and suggestions on possible ways to carve, roll ink or different tools for pressing the transfer.

Figure 15. Student blocks in-process. Students evaluated their prints at this point to see if the result was as they had planned.
Looking at the blocks on display seemed to be a very positive experience for the students. At this point I realized one student was struggling with how to make the carving marks she wanted. She asked me to show her, which I had done before. This time I asked her to not just watch where the tool was carving, but to watch how my hands and arms moved, and how I shifted my body around to get the curve. After that she was able to make the marks that pleased her.

We went back to our design worksheet, and I asked student to re-evaluate their project. Most students felt like they were achieving the desired results, and some felt that their goal was slightly different now. Having the original goal in writing seemed to make it easier to evaluate if they were achieving their goal. When others explained what they saw it was helpful to students in evaluating their print as well. Both the written goal and the verbal feedback seemed to be a positive experience during the carving process.

The remainder of the workshop was used for carving and printing. Some students carved more than one block. One student tried using watercolor on her block at home to transfer a print, then subsequently used watercolor with a block print made in the studio. On the last day of class, there was a flurry to finish up blocks and printing as well as new, small blocks carved for specific purposes such as printing on cards, as a gift for a newly married couple, etc.

The atmosphere of the class was energetic, positive, and fostered creativity among the students. The comments received from the survey seem to support that. The images of students holding their work gives an indication of the value they place in the print. The comments and written feedback, as well as the artwork itself is an indicator of how students went about constructed meaning in their work, as Siegesmund suggested (Siegesmund, 2000).
Figure 16. Students rolling block with ink, registering paper, and printing using a barren made from a wooden baseball bat.

Figure 17. Expressing Joy. Because of a whale-watching experience this student chose to create an image with a joyous, playful mood.
Figure 18. Multiple blocks and prints. One student carved two blocks with different marks, then printed them on multiple paper types to see the effect it had on her print.

Figure 19. A woman I met. This student had met a woman in a rest home and felt a bond with her. With an intense desire to remember that moment, she created this image.
Figure 20. Story Illustration. This student had begun writing fiction, and wanted to illustrate a specific scene from those stories to use as a book cover.

Figure 21. A meaningful print and a fun print. After spending time carving and printing her husband's dog as a gift, this woman decided to carve a fun little tag for her daughter, who was soon to be married, with her new last name.
Figure 22. A young student's quick image of a man and woman. No personal reference or meaning was given for this project, just "something I want to do".

Figure 23. Visiting deer. This student encourages deer to visit his lawn and pasture and enjoys their company. Using a photo he had taken, this print is his interpretation of those visits.
Figure 24. Brushfire. This student used photos she had taken of a brushfire to inspire her print. Choosing the marks carefully and then adding color to the print brought a result she was pleased with.

Figure 25. Whimsy. This student wanted to create a fun, whimsical print using pattern and subject.
Figure 26. My tractor. Our oldest student had spent several years restoring a tractor he now uses in the fields, and strings with lights for Christmas. He was very particular about the details of the print, and was delighted with the result. He may try painting Christmas lights on one of the prints.
Chapter 6 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of how meaningful art can be created in a classroom within the constraints of printmaking processes and how a study of critical analysis or art theory might influence student art making and discourse. I wanted to investigate what would happen if I incorporated the focused learning opportunities I enjoyed in undergraduate classes to a group of individuals in a community art setting, using the same printmaking method that was so instructive and instrumental for me. I hypothesized that the focused limitations of the relief print process might allow students to understand and apply fundamental principles and elements of art, critical analysis and art theory to their art-making in a way that fosters the construction of meaning and brings personal clarity.

In spending time exploring what was personally meaningful, each student was able to look at their varied interests and have the opportunity to combine them with their artistic endeavors. As a result, students were invested in the print, and able to assess the goals they had for the print and how well the final result succeeded. Students were also encouraging and supportive of the personal goals each had for their prints. The underlying theme of personal meaning became a common link, unifying student in completing their own prints and helping others complete their prints. The students did engage in meaningful art making and their understanding of art within the context of the history of printmaking grew as was described in previous chapter.

Our critical analysis gave students the opportunity as well as the vocabulary to look at art in an objective, non-threatening way. Because of the wide range of ages and experience in the group, providing and defining terms through discussion furnished a common language for
exploration and understanding. They were able to analyze their own work as well as the work of others, and to understand the feedback given to them through that analysis.

The study of art and art theory also had an impact on their work as was evident in the ways they made marks and how they connected their mark making to their own emotive impetus. Examining the results of the carved mark relative to the artists’ intent for their work, students analyzed which marks would be most expressive for their own goals. Students made a connection between mark-making and their own intent for their artwork.

My hypothesis statements also included the influence of technical skills on personal artistry. Specifically, I surmised that the negative mark-making that relief print requires would give rise to new understanding about creating images. Participants came to understand their images and compositions much better because they had to view them in reverse and address the negative shapes and marks. By the time they were finished printing, you could say these students knew their subjects forward and backward. They altered their approach to making art because the medium required it, and because they were thinking through a new set of circumstances or rules about making art.

This workshop explored the influence of the printmaking process on students artistic planning and execution. I surmised that the permanent nature of carving the block would cause students to plan, anticipate results, and work with what they could not change. I found evidence that this happened as students paused before carving and adjusted their design, as described in more detail in the previous section. Even for first time printmakers, this method of planning, learning to work through the reverse process, and necessity of working with marks that can’t be changed, provides an opportunity to problem-solve, see relationship of positive/negative shape, and adaptation.
I also surmised that by learning technique students would acquire the ability to better achieve their desired results. I noticed during the six-week workshop that as students developed technical skill they were not only interested in hearing about specific methods of carving, inking, etc., they would rework the carving on their block, or experiment with different methods of inking or transfer to achieve results that aligned with their goals for the print. Learning a new method can help us see new possibilities, which many of the students experienced.

This project also gave me opportunities to reflect on my own pedagogy. For example, I realized the value of doing the exercises that I ask my students to do. My teaching method of front-loading the course so that students had the information and skills as soon as possible worked very well. It allowed students to work at their own pace as well as help others who followed their lead. The frequent opportunities to view relief prints in slides as well as original prints inspired their artistic endeavors and stimulated discussion. In our discussions, and in writing this thesis, I realized how much my own art relies on personal experience and meaning. Each art piece I do relies on personal observation or insight, whether briefly or in-depth. This is perhaps why this became such an important element in this study.

This study was significant because it took place in a community based, non-academic setting where the students ranged in age from 14 to 79. This range of student age and experience is not uncommon in a community based art workshop. The interaction of participants was not divided by age or ability as is common in academic settings, as a consequence participants frequently alternated roles of teacher, learner, and explorer. For this workshop, that diversity became an advantage. If there were a larger group of students of varying age and experience that may or may not be the case. This type of community art educational setting needs further study.
In looking back on my methods of data collections I see things I would do differently if I were to repeat this study. Although I tried to keep my research questions in mind when recording instances, I recorded some things that weren’t relative to this study. Keeping a sheet of paper with each research question typed on a sheet of paper with plenty of space for jotting things that pertain to it would have been a great choice. That would have provided a way to note a word or two during class, and reminded me of instances to make a more thorough notation following the class. Doing this each day would have given me a more complete and rigorous method of data collection. As noted earlier, my wording of the survey questions could have been more open-ended, leaving room for broader responses. The video recordings and photos provided sufficient visual data, and though I can’t think of what I missed, I may have even more visual data had I asked a third party to quietly take photos without interrupting the workshop.

Because of this study I have incorporated meaning-making opportunities into other mediums in the courses I teach. I make an effort to recognize imagery from students who are trying to express through art what they cannot verbalize. I also look for ways to shift the approach to making art in order to more thoroughly understand composition and subject, and although not all art used the reverse process, I’ve brought a mirror into my classroom and encourage students to look at the reverse image of their art to help them see the elements that are in play there. Just as printmaking opened a “whole new world” for my students, I have discovered potential in the theoretical approach of studying the why and how of art education.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Visual Clues Worksheet (side 1)

Focal Point (X)
Sweet Spot (circle)
Emotion? ______________
Energy low or high?
Anything else?

Focal Point (X)
Sweet Spot (circle)
Emotion? ______________
Energy low or high?
Anything else?

The Jungfrau, Felix Vallotton, Woodcut Print. 25x32 cm, 1892
Twilight of Man, Rockwell Kent, Woodcut on Japanese Paper, 11 x 14 in., 1928
Appendix A: Visual Clues Worksheet (side 2)

Focal Point (X)
Sweet Spot (circle)
Emotion?
Energy low or high?
Anything else?

Outdoors. Friedolin Kessler. Woodcut. 196x275mm. 1936
Mammoth - Artist and title unknown
Appendix B: Puzzling It Out Worksheet

Puzzling it out... Where do I start!?

**What**
- do you find interesting or important or feel strongly about?

**Why**
- is that important or noteworthy?

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**Ready**
- Now, go:
  - Find objects that have meaning or memory.
  - Make sketches of all or parts of things, people, or memories on your **What** list.
  - Take photos of things / places / people that illustrate things on your **Why** list.

**Set**
- Gather everything you’ve collected to one place.
  - Combine objects together, or photos with objects, or photos and sketches, etc. to make small groups of interesting things.
  - Take notice of shape and texture.

**Go!**
- Make a quick sketch of your composition or assembly.
  - Hint: Fold a sheet of paper in fourths to get approximate size of your carving.
  - Fill in dark areas to add interest
  - Bring 2-4 of these sketched ideas to class along with your inspiration objects or sketch and photo references.
Appendix C: Mark Making Worksheet

Mark Making

Just as scribbling in drawing produces a certain effect, so do your carving marks. Hacking away with abandon on your lino will show on your print. Every stroke contributes to the overall image. A little forethought will yield great results!

What do the marks and patterns visually feel like or remind you of?
What does it say about the artist’s intention, or the subject / form?
How would you describe it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bold</th>
<th>Ordered</th>
<th>Calm</th>
<th>Interesting</th>
<th>Energetic</th>
<th>Frantic</th>
<th>Smooth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barely there - wispy</td>
<td>Rough</td>
<td>Rushed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After you make your designs with a marker, describe each square and label it.

---

Describes the shape

---
Your Design - Now What?

- What is the mood / emotion / quality you want this piece to have?
  What kind of shapes, marks, lines portray that?

- Where do you want the area of focus to be?
  How will you emphasize it?

- What patterns / directional carving will you use?

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Mid-project

Is your original concept still there?

What is the most meaningful aspect of this project so far?

Done!

Is your original concept still there?

What is the best part of this project?

Is there another idea you want to develop now?
Appendix E: Keep in Mind…

When designing your print, keep in mind the two basic rules of art:
1 - Know the Elements and Principles of Art.
   - Design Elements: Line, Shape, Space/Form, Value/Color, Texture
   - Golden mean, or Rule of Thirds for placement.
   - Imitating rules of nature such as using odd number of objects, symmetry and asymmetry.
   - Diagonals can be more dynamic, horizontal can be more peaceful.

2 – Feel free to break the rules IF you have good reason AND you can make it work.

Principles of Design

The principles of design describe the ways that artists use the elements of art in a work of art.

**Balance** is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colors, texture, and space. If the design was a scale, these elements should be balanced to make a design feel stable. In symmetrical balance, the elements used on one side of the design are similar to those on the other side; in asymmetrical balance, the sides are different but still look balanced. In radial balance, the elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar.

**Emphasis** is the part of the design that catches the viewer’s attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc.

**Movement** is the path the viewer’s eye takes through the work of art, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape, and color within the work of art.

**Pattern** is the repeating of an object or symbol all over the work of art.

**Repetition** works with pattern to make the work of art seem active. The repetition of elements of design creates unity within the work of art.

**Proportion** is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other. When drawing the human figure, proportion can refer to the size of the head compared to the rest of the body.

**Rhythm** is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement. Rhythm creates a mood like music or dancing. To keep rhythm exciting and active, variety is essential.

**Variety** is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer’s attention and to guide the viewer’s eye through and around the work of art.

**Unity** is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness.
Appendix F: Executing Your Print

When executing your print, keep in mind:

Design your block with Light, Medium, and Dark areas in unequal portions (one dominates). Draw you design the exact size you want the print on tracing paper with a 2B (or darker) pencil. As you design, be think of the direction you will carve (you can mark it on your paper as well).

Everything the you do to the block, you are also doing to the print
• Haphazard or careless carving will give the print a chaotic feel
• Carving can be angled or curved to describe the form
• Using different caving gestures and varying the tool will help describe different areas/objects
• Random gouges or mishaps can show in final print. Embrace what you can’t change!

Neatness counts!
• Take the time to carve carefully, ink completely, and keep the area clean. A great print with a black smudge on it isn’t nearly so amazing.
• The area and all tools need to be completely cleaned before we leave. Feel free to assist others.
  - Use scrap/newspaper to keep things neat – stack them to use over again.
  - Putty knives have five edges and a handle to be cleaned.
  - Brayers should rest on their backs (not roller) and all edges, pins, surfaces, and handle cleaned before ink dries.
  - Return all the tools – DRY – to the correct area.
• Prepare your paper carefully when tearing or cutting so that it is even and the correct size.

A 5x7 is used to more easily make a 4x6 print (to allow for bleed, border, etc). You can make a full 5x7 print as well.
References


Barrett, T. (2000). *Studio critiques of student art: As they are, as they could be with mentoring*. Retrieved March 6, 2017, from Ace-Notebook: https://ace-notebook.com/view.php?res=1ufV2aWYnerY4Jnd0-XT4s3K4OOG3d_Y4eiPzNrWndzOytLO4aLRzdHcnbXC293O4ueBkZ2ZnqOKib7d49fK2Ius4NzV0tze0-aB2NGJwefWzdDX4pOi29-X3tfHSnwkBQwoMWYyXHllyJkwxNDI&keyword=AUTHOR%3ATerry+Barrett+TITLE%3AStudio+Critiques+of+Student+Art%3A+As+they+could+be+with+mentoring&b=n6MsPFsVSdik2FPMTAy


based art education classroom. 23. Columbia University.


University of Toronto.


