

Background

Background

From the imagination of the mind and onto the illusive page, illustrations, photos, and type, all come together, once a print is made. The art of the designer may become a design on a t-shirt, pages in a novel, colorful drawings on a greeting card, or a beautiful poster design for someone’s wall. Each type of final art is produced by different types of printing and substrates that the art is printed on. The printing used provides varying details of aesthetics in the final product. Today, many artists use computers to design digitally. If an artist wants to portray a certain aesthetic with a finished product, understanding the history of printing and the analog methods of printing can inform the artist when designing digitally. With new technology and tools available for digital artists today, designs are still produced to have that human touch and handmade aesthetic. The need for research is crucial in recreating a traditional look and feel to a printed piece.

Types of printmaking

There are many different kinds of printmaking that the artist can choose to use and study. I chose to study the main printmaking techniques which are categorized as Relief, Intaglio, Planographic, and Stencil printing. It was important to know the history behind the process of relief printing to get an idea of how the images were illustrated, and then translated into carved images. The images were carved into substances such as wood and linoleum. I also found it important to know the type of paper used to transfer the ink onto. The typical papers used have certain textures as well as the ink and its texture.

Introduction/Research Question

How would I go about creating relief printed designs to encourage and excite while maintaining an organic human feel to the artwork?

**Words** I initially needed to do a search on what encouraging quotes and Bible verses I would use for my designs. I looked at famous Christian author’s quotes, top encouraging Bible verses, and general inspirational famous quotes. I settled on some favorite verses of mine and words I felt would brighten someone’s day.

**Imagery** I embarked on the visual sea of images on the Internet. I looked at a large variety of website images of woodcut, linocut, and stamped images. I also viewed source images for my illustrations.

**Sketches** I created pencil thumbnail sketches to layout my designs. After narrowing down some of the thumbnail sketches, I started creating the digital sketches by scanning in the sketches. Some images were traced by hand, and others were illustrated by tracing photographs. I created the first digital drafts of the designs.

Methods

The method for illustrating these pieces would be to use brush packs made as vector illustrations. The brushes are turned into a pattern that is saved in a swatch panel in Illustrator. Some brushes were custom made. Fig. 4, shows an example of a brush pack I purchased online.

**Train and practice** Using LinkedIn Learning, I completed some tutorials on creating organic and linocut designs using Illustrator. I was able to download numerous woodcut style brushes and also various background textures that would work well for the project. Because all of my design work will be rendered as vector art, I was able to experiment with the colors as they are easily changed. After finishing the drawings in Illustrator, I completed research on colors to choose the best colors for each poster.

**Lines** There are characteristic thick and thin lines that create the outlines, shading, hatch work, solids, and bumpy textures make up a linocut/relief. There are lines that are medium, tapered on one or both ends, medium, short, or long length lines, slanted, dashed, dots, and arrowhead shaped dots.

**Techniques** The last step would be to add the numerous effects to make the images look grungy or faintly printed in some areas, giving the illustrations an organic appearance. Textures for paper, for grunge ink effects, paint splatters, and scratches—all layered together perform the authentic look.

**Off-register** Beside creating the strokes of the images with various shaped brushes, I offset all the elements on the page so they would appear as misaligned registration. This is characteristic of a relief print where there is one color per separation and after each pass the paper shifts a bit.

**Typography/hand drawn lettering** For the lettering, I experimented used linocut or woodcut typefaces and added effects as necessary to give it a vintage look. I also created some hand drawn type for a challenge.

History of Relief Printing

1st: Reviewed the history of analog lithograph and relief printing and techniques for background information.



Fig. 1 Ink and texture of relief printing



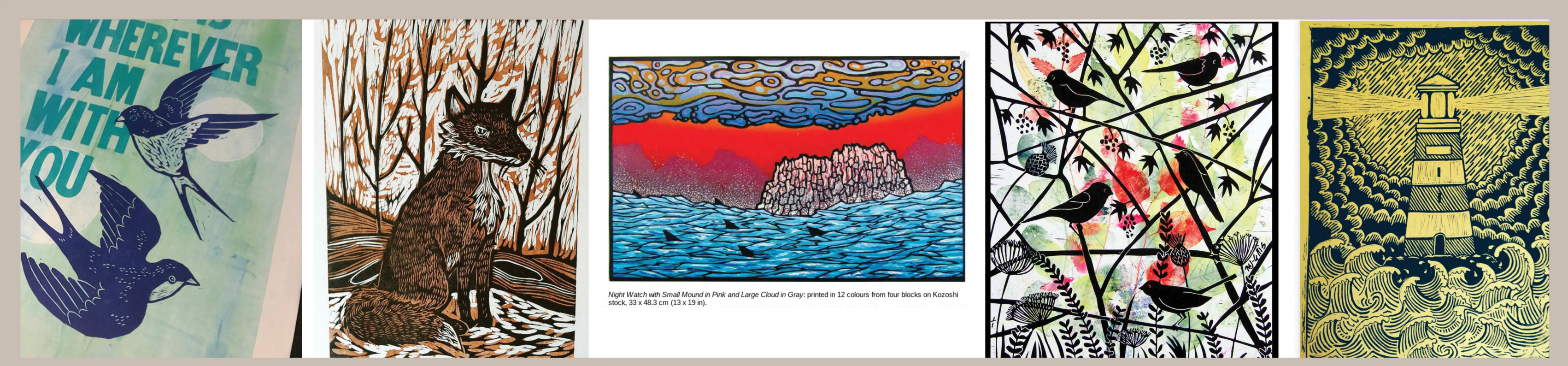
Fig. 2 Linocut: studied a variety of relief printing



Fig. 3 Inspiration for handcut lettering

Style & Color

Inspiration for relief prints and colors by internet searches



Linocut brushes

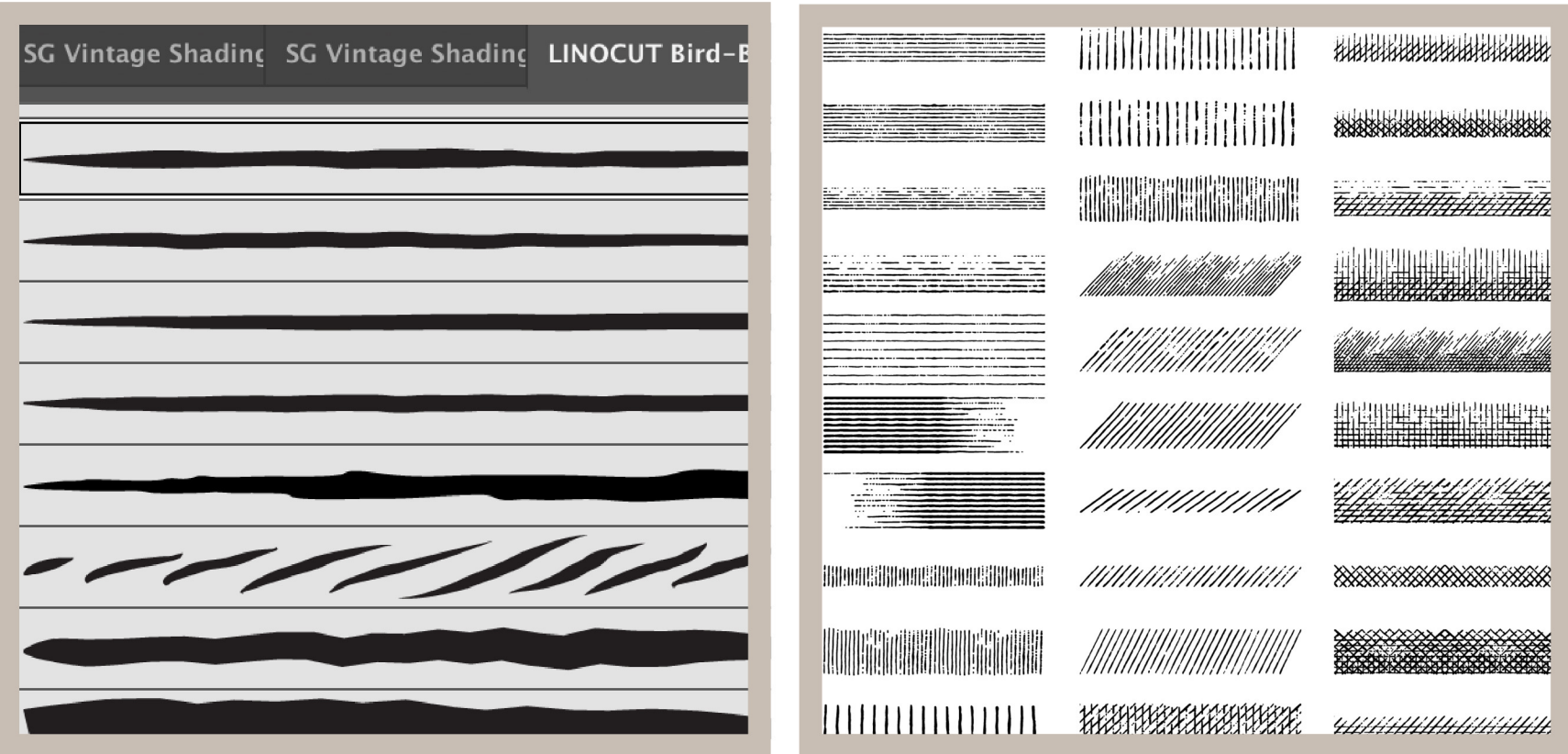
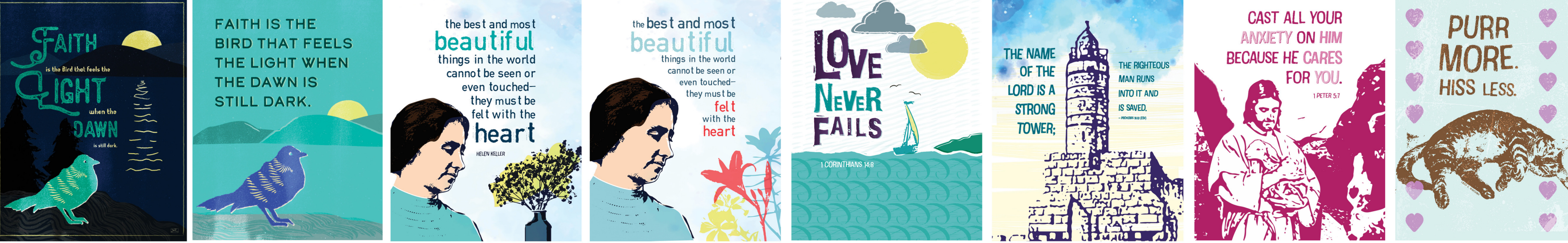


Fig. 4

Thumbnail Sketches



Digital draft designs



Final deliverables



Mock-ups



Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Results and/or Conclusion

Results

Because digital design is much more versatile, easily editable, and efficient with time and money you have the latitude to be very creative and try different styles and colors of your design. With digital design, you miss out on the feel of the materials, the smell of the inks. Although, using a computer mouse or a stylus pen on a tablet is partially tactile. Using the stylus, provides a more realistic sense for drawing and painting. What is interesting too is that the finished product has the printing process textures built in to make it look like it was printed traditionally. That gives you much more flexibility in your designs. As in the traditional techniques, you still need lots of practice to hone your skills.

Conclusions

No matter what analog methods of printing a designer chooses to mimic, with a complete study of the history and techniques used, and plenty of practice, it will arm the artist with a well-rounded approach. The artist will then be able to confidently produce an interesting piece. Having knowledge of the digital tools, tips, and tricks allowed me as an artist to create an awesome organic look with that inclusive human touch. There is nothing like receiving a handmade card or painting. It’s personal and you will always remember who gave it to you and how you felt. I endeavored to put in the same heart and love into these posters. And even though they are designed digitally, the same joy and excitement can be the result of receiving these colorful prints.

Future Work

1. Collaborate with a psychology team and do a survey with focus group with the prints I created. See why they like them, and how it makes them feel.
2. Contrast with a set of artwork that does not have a relief printed aesthetic and compare the feedback.
3. Work with other traditional techniques such as watercolor, pastel, or acrylic painting and emulate using Adobe Illustrator and its brushes.
4. Try using Adobe Photoshop and its brushes and see what the difference is in the renderings.
5. Create more sets of custom brushes.

Works Cited

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**Fig. 1** *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York. The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1951 (51.501.7695). <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/drawings-and-prints/materials-and-techniques/printmaking/woodcut>.

**Fig. 2** *Linocut Workshop. Draw Cut Ink Press*. “Colour Lino Printing Workshop Review: Resort Studios.” Draw Cut Ink Press, 27 Feb. 2016. [www.drawcutinkpress.com/colour-lino-printing-workshop/](http://www.drawcutinkpress.com/colour-lino-printing-workshop/).

Fig. 3 Creative Market. The Artifex Forges. Viewed January 28, 2021. [https://creativemarket.com/TheArtifexForge/38719-LinocutBrushes?u=crystalpaints%3Fu%3Dcrystalpaints&utm\\_source=Pinterest&utm\\_medium=CM+Social+Share&utm\\_campaign=Product+Social+Share&utm\\_content=Linocut+Brushes&ts=202005](https://creativemarket.com/TheArtifexForge/38719-LinocutBrushes?u=crystalpaints%3Fu%3Dcrystalpaints&utm_source=Pinterest&utm_medium=CM+Social+Share&utm_campaign=Product+Social+Share&utm_content=Linocut+Brushes&ts=202005).

**Fig. 4** suedanstock. “Photo frame on wall mockup Premium Psd.” [https://www.freepik.com/premium-psd/photo-frame-wall-mockup\\_5875763.htm#page=2&query=apartment++mockup+living+room++poster+frame+mockup&position=44](https://www.freepik.com/premium-psd/photo-frame-wall-mockup_5875763.htm#page=2&query=apartment++mockup+living+room++poster+frame+mockup&position=44). Accessed on 19 February 2021.

**Fig. 5** jcomp. “Mockup poster frames in the empty wooden frame standing on living room modern interior. Free Psd.” Freepik.com. [https://www.freepik.com/free-psd/mockup-poster-frame-empty-wooden-frame-standing-living-room-modern-interior\\_11688525.htm](https://www.freepik.com/free-psd/mockup-poster-frame-empty-wooden-frame-standing-living-room-modern-interior_11688525.htm). Accessed 23 February 2021.

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