

IMPRESSION / EXPRESSION

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In this paper, I will ponder my connection with printmaking not only as a professor, artist, and researcher but also as a Spanish speaker who is interested in the fact that Spanish-speaking and English-speaking nations use different expressions to refer to this artistic discipline. In addition, I will reflect on how these expressions could interfere with the way I relate to my creative process. I will not go deeply into specific linguistic studies, just enough observations to make my point.

GRABADO – MARKED / GRABADO – PRINT

Printmaking has two distinct stages. The first is making the plate or matrix on a carrier surface using direct or indirect methods. The second is transferring the image by applying ink and pressure, which creates a stamp or print. Printmaking techniques are divided into four major processes: relief, intaglio, surface, and stencil. The difference among the processes is how the plate is inked, which depends on how the design is created on the plate.

Printmaking on paper as a source of communication, image reproduction, and art was brought to Latin America from Europe. In Peru, where I was born, printmaking is not especially well known because arts and cultural politics have been more focused on historical studies and archaeological foundries. Also, we do not have deep historical engagements with this particular art form before and after colonialism (s. XVI). Other countries, like Chile and Brazil, embraced printmaking as a powerful medium of political protest, and some artists even used it to represent cultural traditions that developed as a sort of chronicle archives. In Peru, even now, printmaking is part of only a few academic programs, and the number of graduates is not high. However, we do have an engaging history with engraving. In most Andean countries, engraved surfaces such as rocks, wood, metal, and pumpkins have been found. However, extremely few engraved objects used to be printed on skin or embossed.

In Spanish, the noun «grabado» refers to the art form of printmaking and the prints. Here is the definition of «grabado» by the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*:

Grabado

1. m. Acción de grabar (□ señalar, abrir y labrar en una superficie).
2. m. Arte y técnica de grabar (□ señalar, abrir y labrar en una superficie).
3. m. Estampa obtenida por medio de la impresión de planchas tratadas con la técnica del grabado.

We can see that «grabado» has two major meanings. The first and second meanings refer to



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure Titles and information

Figure 1: De velo

Figure 2: Gestos

the action itself and the technique required to do it. The third meaning refers to the result of the printing process. The first two definitions could be the cause of some traditional arguments suggesting that surface and stencil techniques cannot be considered real printmaking processes because the plate is not marked by tools or chemicals. This scenario might appear principally in places that used the word «grabado» to refer to the art form of printmaking, which comes from the French word 'graver', meaning to mark with an incision or open and carve on a surface a sign, a figure, or a representation of an object.

As I mentioned before, Spanish printmakers use the term «grabado» as a noun to refer to the print instead of using «estampa» which, by definition, is a print obtained by printing plates treated with an engraving technique. The word «estampa» could be translated into English as a stamp or print. The «estampa» is the final product of graphic art and its most genuine characteristic is multiplicity, so named because the printing process is called «estampar» ('stamping' in English). Despite such an obvious argument, there is unjustified resistance to the use of the term «estampa», due, in part, to its association with images of religious connotations: a circumstance that can be justified by the immense production of religious stamps in Catholic countries, especially in Spain (Gelonch-Viladegut, 2013).

«Impresión» is another word referring to the print, so named because the printing process is called «imprimir» ('printing' in English). The word «impresión» can be used to refer to the printing process as well, and many printmakers prefer to use these expressions instead of «estampa» and «estampar».

Almost any Spanish speaker will associate the word «grabado» with engraving metal, tooling leather, recording music, or other products and activities. Colleagues from other Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking nations tell me they encounter the same scenario in their contexts. As a Spanish professor, I find it challenging to name the courses so that any student from any faculty could understand what the course is about only by its name. For English speakers, this may be less difficult as the term 'printmaking' allows a clear view of the objective of the artistic discipline offered, which is making a plate to produce prints.

This comparison made me ponder my connection with printmaking, whether this was the result of how I refer to it, and what printmaking means to me. How can we refer to the same subject differently? Are we talking about different things? Could a word change our relationship with the subject it refers to? I will expand on this argument in the next section.

TO IMPRESS / TO EXPRESS

These questions arose a few years after I completed my master's degree in Brazil in 2015 when I looked for the meaning of the word «impresión» to explore the richness of printmaking vocabulary



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

corresponding to the different discursive facets they address: conceptual, technical, formal, and historical.

According to my conceptual research, «impresión» refers to a mark impressed on a surface by pressure. It also refers to an effect produced on someone. Derived from the Latin «imprimere», the word «impresión» comes from in- 'into' + premere 'to press', and has similarities in Portuguese, Italian, French, and English.

IM - PRESSION

la. IMPRIMERE
It. IMPRESSIONE
fr. IMPRESSION
es. IMPRESIÓN
pt. IMPRESSÃO
en. IMPRESSION

«in» "into" + «premere» "to press"
making an image under pressure // feeling that one person leaves
in the spirit of another

"Into" is as important as "to press" because printmaking is all about contact and interaction between materials in the making process. Taking into consideration the Latin origins of the term 'impression', the artist and plate are both impressed beings because they carry some sort of mark, whether the plate submits to the will of the artist or the artist submits to the forces of the plate's nature.

EX - PRESSION

la. EXPRIMERE
it. ESPRESSIONE
fr. EXPRESSION
es. EXPRESIÓN
pt. EXPRESSÃO
en. EXPRESSION

«ex» "out" + «premere» "to press"
the production of something by pressing or squeezing it out // the
process of making known one's thoughts or feelings

"Out" is as important as "to press" because the expression is understood as the act of pushing outwards, that is, an extension of the interaction of beings that are transformed or impressed in the process. Therefore, any stamp or print is the expression itself. In summary, the artist and materials express themselves to each other and become impressed by those expressions in one way or another.

LANGUAGE FOR THE DEEPENING OF A PHENOMENOLOGICAL VIEW OF THE FIELD OF PRINTMAKING

In the years I have been immersed in this art form, I have made more plates than prints because I feel more related to the process of engraving, etching, and moulding. Of course, I produced many prints during my years of study and many more after that. Currently, I am attracted to making my materials, such as homemade relief presses, inks, and baren. I have also immersed myself in the world of letterpress and have acquired to date eight metal-type fonts, a chevalet, and two small letterpresses. Nevertheless, whether I am making art pieces or writing essays, my creative process involves the realisation of linguistic metaphors between material expressions, engraving or scratching processes, and my human condition.

When I finished graduate school, besides traditional printmaking, I focused on non-traditional and experimental approaches to printmaking to explore human ethereal existence through the fragility of paper, the image barely presented, or the subtle mark of a presence using a variety of materials like embossed paraffin (Figure 1). Some years later, while studying for my master's degree in Brazil, I collected local fibres and seeds. During that time, I developed some pieces by scratching and carving local seed surfaces (Figure 2) and creating embossed handmade paper (Figure 3) to express fragmentation, displacement, and resignification translated from the mark or the trace.

My artist's poetics recurrently targets questions about self-awareness, human dimensions, and the essence of life. My last artworks (Figures 4 and 5) were produced at the beginning of 2022 and conceived through the practice of nine meditation sessions proposed by Barbara Hand Claw in her book *Alchemy of Nine Dimensions*. It ponders the different states of matter, which could be seen as portals to the spiritual world to expand self-creative spaces of awareness and resulted in two series. The larger one "illustrates" the visions I had during these nine meditations, and they were made by linocut and paper cut. The smaller series is about the organic and geometric elements of the dimensions; they were made almost entirely by paper cut and needle trace perforation.

CONCLUSIONS

As a researcher, I found myself several times using expressions like 'impress' and 'mark' in the arguments of my artistic proposals and daily dialogues. At the Impact 10 conference in 2018, I had the opportunity to expose how I relate to printmaking by using the concept of affection. The issue of 'affection' presented there was related to the affective and emotional part of the impressed human beings who express themselves by making art; and, at the same time, the affection constituted by the action of affecting, touching, hurting, and caressing. At that moment I identified myself as being impressed or marked in all my human dimensions, and I deduced that this was the reason for

such a deep connection between making, feeling, and thinking about printmaking. Therefore, language was important for the deepening of a phenomenological view of the field of printmaking.

I am no expert in the matter, but since language is the way we process and share information, I have shared in this paper some expressions that caught my attention concerning printmaking as a technical field and an art form, but most importantly, as a way of understanding my human condition through the arts. It also motivated me to become more intimately connected with my work and myself by generating affective and cognitive knowledge, breaking down inherited structures, and consciously building my path, to find my talents and, through my talents, connect and benefit humankind.

Sometimes finding the correct words to express oneself can be challenging because language is a complex and beautiful human instrument.

Whether we call it «grabado» or printmaking, this art form can become a substantial source of knowledge when considered as an introspective wandering through the process and understood as a “place of sublime contamination” where knowledge emerges from the interaction between different subjects or beings.

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IMAGE GALLERY



Figure 1: De velo
Figure 2: Gestos



Figure 3: Silhueta gravada
Figure 4: Portals: Symbolic transferences



Figure 5: Portals: Symbolic transferences