

Tree Printmaking

Step-by-Step Instructions



There are many different printmaking techniques, including relief. **Relief printmaking** involves carving or cutting away areas of a surface. The raised, uncarved surface is covered with ink and is pressed (or printed) onto paper. This process is similar to using a stamp or printing your fingerprint with ink.

Pictured here are Matsubara Naoko's "Solitude Series" woodcut prints on display in the PAMA Art Gallery. Matsubara is an artist from Japan that moved to Canada. She is known for her woodcut prints. Learn more about the artist in the virtual exhibition [Inspiring Stories of Women in the PAMA Collections](#).



Woodcuts are a type of relief printmaking technique – similar to the type of art you will be making today. When making a woodcut print, an artist carves an image into a block of wood. When completed, ink is put on the top of the woodcut and it is printed by pressing it on paper. The raised surface of the wood creates the image and the parts that were carved do not get printed. Woodcuts are a very old type of printing process, dating back to the late fourteenth century. Woodcuts were sold in the markets and pasted on walls and doors, much as posters are used today.

Today your fun foam will mimic a wood block and your pencil will act as a carving tool. Matsubara's "Solitude" woodcuts include different expressions of trees. Think of the trees in Matsubara's woodcuts and the trees coming to life in spring as you create your print!

Materials: Fun Foam (or substitute with a styrofoam tray, like the kind that meat is packed with), Pencil, Washable Markers, Spray Bottle, Paper

1. Sketch your tree

Lightly draw your tree on the fun foam or styrofoam using a dull pencil. Notice how light the pencil marks are in the sample. Draw lightly first in case you want to change anything. Printing is similar to stamping. Anything you draw will be printed backwards. If you include letters or words, you will want to draw them backwards.



2. Carve

When you are happy with your image, go over your drawing and “carve” the lines in deeper with your pencil. Be careful not to go too hard or you could cut through the foam.



3. Colour

It’s now time to “ink” your print. Use the flat side of washable markers to colour the image. Cover the entire piece of foam except for the lines that were made. Note: the carved grooves will be the colour of the paper that it will be printed on.



4. Print

Use a spray bottle to lightly spray your foam. You don’t want it to be too wet. Put the foam image side down on the paper to print it. Without moving it, put pressure on it so you can transfer the marker onto the paper. Slowly lift up the foam to reveal the printed image. Printmakers often print their images in series. You can now wash your print and repeat the process on a new paper.

