

Monotype

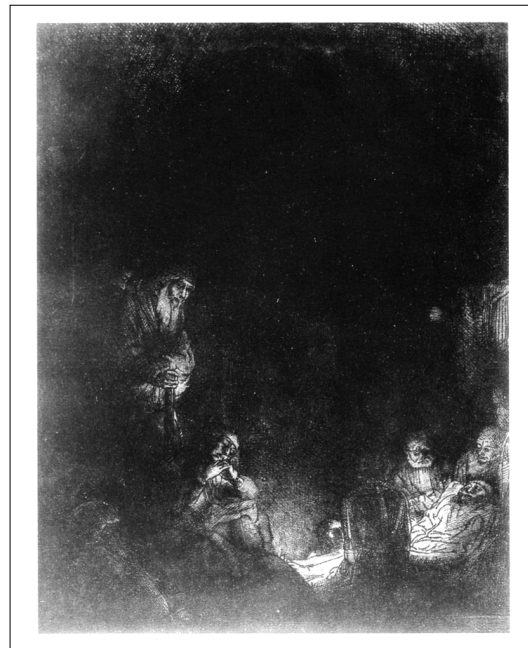
Definition: Monotype, from “mono” meaning “one” and “type” meaning “impression,” is a planar¹ process done on a plate that has an unaltered matrix². A monotype yields a single, fully inked, impression but may include a “ghost” impression that is not as intense as the initial print. A monotype may be done additively, subtractively, as a combination of the two, or as frottage³. Monotyping is considered by some to be the most “painterly” Printmaking process.

Monotype versus Monoprint: In the academic art world the term *monotype* is used for singular work developed on a plate with an unaltered matrix², utilizing its flat surface, while *monoprint* refers to single, unique, sometimes uniquely hand colored, prints created on an altered matrix² and pulled from any of the printmaking processes.

Short History: Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione made the earliest known monotypes in Italy around 1640. These early monotypes were done using what is known as the subtractive method, whereby ink is rolled over the plates surface and an image is developed by using rags and brushes, for example, to remove ink from the plate. Around the same time as Castiglione, Rembrandt van Rijn wiped his etchings, plates that had an altered matrix, in unique ways altering the tones and values of the ink left on the plate. Since he was working on plates with a developed matrix, and his manipulation of tone could not be exactly reproduced, Rembrandt’s prints done in this way are considered monoprints.



The Nativity, a white line drawing drawn into a dark ground monotype, by Castiglione



The Entombment, an etching-based monoprint, by Rembrandt (right.)

¹ Planar indicates that something is 2-dimensional, having length and width but no height or depth.

² An altered matrix is, for Printmaking, an image or texture embedded in the plate.

³ Frottage means “an image obtained by rubbing on top of something underneath the surface.”