

# Wood Engraving

Wood Engravings are usually made on end-grain wood. End-grain blocks are usually small by comparison to wood cut along the grain (side grain). As the grain runs at right angles to the cut, it has little or no influence on the cutting which gives it a very different character to the woodcut. Engraving on close-grained wood with a fine, dense texture permits extremely detailed work - a predominant characteristic of this process.

The wood needs to be seasoned for several years and the surface to be engraved should be planed and sanded to a completely smooth finish (like glass)

The best wood (both for its durability and uniform consistency) is boxwood, but lemon is a similar and cheaper substitute.

End-grain wood had long been used to carve hardwearing blocks for textile printing, but its use as an artists medium was not established until the late 18th century when Thomas Bewick (1754 - 1828), in the UK, developed it for illustrating books because it would print many more impressions, before wearing down, than the traditional woodcut. It also took much finer cutting than woodcut. The majority of engravings were cut by artisans with no great artistic talent but with great technical virtuosity.

Wood engraving requires both time and patience so, to produce large images very swiftly, a master engraver would draw the design on to a large block which would then be divided into pieces, each of which would be engraved separately by one of a team of engravers.

## **Edwina Ellis RE**

Edwina Ellis is a graphic designer and printmaker. Born in Sydney, she moved to London in 1972. After working as a jeweller in both Australia and London, she took up wood engraving, specialising in multiblock colour engravings. She has travelled widely in India, Africa and Arabia, which has been a great source of inspiration. Since 1984 she has exhibited regularly in both solo and group exhibitions. Her work can be seen in several public collections including the Victoria and Albert Museum, Ashmolean Museum and the University Library of California. She was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Painter Printmakers in 1985

## **Peter Lawrence RE**

Peter initially trained as a graphic designer, specialising in illustration. He began wood engraving in 1990 and also began painting and making collographs in the mid 1990s. He was elected as a member of the Society of Wood Engravers in 1998. He is also an elected Member of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers (RE), and a member of the Oxford Art Society and of the Oxford Printmakers' Cooperative.

He has always been influenced by the St.Ives tradition and also by listening to contemporary jazz. The combining of structure with the freedom of expression demonstrated in this music is often what he is trying to achieve in his work. Having worked with completely abstract images, he is now exploring the idea of engraving in different styles, as if in a collage, but within a single print. He enjoys being part of the long and distinguished history of wood engraving but using traditional techniques to express his own vision.

## **Peter S Smith**

He studied Fine Art at Birmingham School of Art and Design (BA (Hons) Fine Art, 1969), Art Education at Manchester University (Post Graduate Certificate in Education, 1970) and printmaking at Wimbledon School of Art (MA Printmaking, 1992) He is a member of the Society of Wood Engravers and Associate Member of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers. His paintings and prints are exhibited in the UK and overseas with works in public and private collections, including Tate Britain and the Ashmolean, Oxford. He currently has a studio at the St Bride Foundation Bride Lane London, where he teaches wood engraving and lino printing.

"It started wood engraving in 1978 alongside painting and other printmaking. I found that it was perfect for some of my visual interests and brings with it a love for the wood, the tools and the printing process."

## **Roy Willingham**

"I have never subscribed to the idea of wood engraving as a medium complete in itself and have always been interested in how it might be used in conjunction with other media. I have printed onto different supports, used it in combination with paint or collage, and manipulated the surface of prints to explore the possibilities for expanding its potential. I feel that there is scope to use its distinctive mark making and ability to create rich texture on a small scale in combination with other media to create abstract images which would allow the formal aspects of the medium a more dominant role."

## Anne Desmet

She gained a BA & MA at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford University, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Printmaking at Central School of Art and Design, London, UK. She has taught wood engraving widely, inc. at the RA Schools, British Museum and Middlesex University. An Honorary Fellow and former External Examiner (BA & MA Fine Art) Aberystwyth University, she is now External Examiner at Kingston College of Art. In 2011, Desmet was elected a member of the Royal Academy of Arts and is only the third wood engraver ever elected to the RA in its entire history. She is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers (RE), the Royal West of England Academy (RWA) and the Society of Wood Engravers (SWE). In 1998 her retrospective exhibition, *Anne Desmet: Towers and Transformations*, opened at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, before touring the UK. In 2008, Manchester's Whitworth Art Gallery launched a new retrospective: *Anne Desmet - Urban Evolution*, which toured until 2010. Her exhibition: *Anne Desmet - Olympic Metamorphoses* toured the UK from 2010-12. Desmet's prints feature in selected solo and group shows worldwide. Since 1987 she has received over 30 national and international awards including (1989-90) a British School at Rome Scholarship in Printmaking. She has had 16 solo shows in London since 1990, including 6 with Hart Gallery, which represented her from 2003-2012.

Anne was editor of *Printmaking Today* (from 1998-2013) - the quarterly journal of international graphic art. She is co-author of *Handmade Prints* (2000), author of *Primary Prints* (2010) and co-editor of *Printmakers - the Directory* (2006) all published by A&C Black. Other publications include: *Anne Desmet: Towers and Transformations* - catalogue raisonné (Ashmolean Museum, 1998); *Private Views: Artists working today* (Serpent's Tail, 2004); *Wood Engraving and the Woodcut in Britain c.1890-1990* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1994); *The Times*, *RA Magazine*, *Art Review*, *Art Monthly*, *Burlington*, *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*.