

# { FINNISH DESIGN SHOP }

*Pieces of Nordic Happiness*

## Prints

### What is printmaking?

Printmaking is an artform in which images are transferred onto paper using a matrix, which, essentially, is a template that allows the artist to create several impressions of the same design. Printmaking techniques can also be used to create unique original prints, but more often a single matrix is used to create multiple works – the series of impressions of the same work are referred to as editions.

In addition to artistic vision and skill, traditional printmaking represents high-quality artisanship. Prints are created one by one, meaning that there can be some variation between different prints of the same edition. Usually, this means slight differences in the hues of the work. Additionally, the artists may add details by hand. Despite the differences, prints are usually not considered unique pieces as such, unless the matrix really is used to make a single print – these are then referred to as monotypes.

Printmaking requires collaboration of several art professionals. Very rarely does the artist take care of the whole process alone. Often, the artist creates the matrix and oversees the production of the first prints to make sure they are happy with the rest of the edition to be printed. Printing the editions, like creating the matrix, is a craft. Inks are transferred to the work one colour at a time. Once all the works have been printed, the artist usually signs each print by hand.

### Techniques

Fine art prints can be created using various techniques. Traditionally, prints can be classified as relief, intaglio, planographic and serigraphic prints.

In **relief printing**, ink is applied to the original surface of the matrix and then transferred onto paper. The matrix is often made of wood.

In **intaglio printing**, ink is applied beneath the original

surface, in incised lines or sunken areas. The matrix is usually made of copper or some other metal. Intaglio techniques include etching, engraving, carborundum and aquatint.

In **planographic printing**, the matrix has an even surface and the ink is applied to a specially prepared, for example painted, part of it. The matrix material has traditionally been limestone or some other stone, but metal plates can also be used. Lithography is an example of a planographic technique.

In **serigraphy** or screen printing, the ink is transferred onto the paper through a mesh stretched over a frame.

### Edition types and printer's marks

All the prints in our selection are hand-signed by the artists. In addition to the signature, the works feature a printer's mark and, if the print is part of a numbered edition, an edition number that usually also tells you the size of the edition. Some of the works were not originally intended for sale, but for exhibitions or for the artist's own use, for example – in these cases, the print will have a special printer's mark.

Different artists may have different ways of marking and signing prints. For example, abbreviations may be used with or without punctuation. Many of the edition notation practices are derived from the French language, but notations may also be made in English or, for example, in the artist's native language.

The edition labels used in the prints in our selection are listed below.

#### Numbered, Arabic numbers

The edition is numbered in Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3...)

#### Numbered, Roman numbers

The edition is numbered in Roman numerals (I, II, III...)

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## **H.C., numbered**

The abbreviation comes from the French expression Hors (de) Commerce, “not for trade” in English. A print with this label was not originally intended for sale but may have been created for an exhibition or even to be given as a gift. Today, prints with this label are sold alongside other types of prints. The prints are numbered.

## **H.C., not numbered**

The abbreviation comes from the French expression Hors (de) Commerce, “not for trade” in English. A print with this label was not originally intended for sale but may have been created for an exhibition or even to be given as a gift. Today, prints with this label are sold alongside other types of prints. The prints are not numbered.

## **P.EX.**

The abbreviation comes from the words Publisher’s example. A publisher often has the option to keep one or more prints of the edition they publish – these are kept to the same standard as the rest of the edition, but they are not considered to be part of the actual numbered edition.

## **P.T.**

The abbreviation comes from the French word Printer Tirage. A printer often has the option to keep one impression of the edition they print – these are kept to the same standard as the rest of the edition, but they are not considered to be part of the actual numbered edition.

## **E.A. or P.A.**

The abbreviation EA comes from the French words Épreuve d’artiste, or, in English, Artist’s proof. Some artists also use the English abbreviation AP or PA. The artist may keep a limited number of prints for their own use – these are kept to the same standard as the rest of the edition, but they are not considered to be part of the actual numbered edition.