AMERICAN LETTERPRESS

THE ART OF

HATCH

SHOW * PRINT

EDUCATION RESOURCES
Thank you for your interest in American Letterpress: The Art of Hatch Show Print, a traveling exhibition organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum, and Hatch Show Print.

The information included here will increase your familiarity with the concepts in the exhibition, while the text and images will provide a “behind-the-scenes” look at Hatch Show Print, its archival holdings, its celebrity clients, and the way this business has been making posters for more than 125 years.

At the conclusion of this guide, you will find a glossary of terms that have been used in the exhibition script or related publications. We have also included a video tour of the Hatch shop produced by the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum, and an audio recording from Smithsonian Folkways that highlights some of the music and events that appear on Hatch posters.

While the following pages may be printed out and distributed to museum educators, docents, teachers, or the public, they may also be enlarged to poster size (12.75 x 16.5”) for hanging in a resource room or additional gallery. Technical specifications for printing are noted on page 5.

We always appreciate learning how museums use our resource materials. Please let us hear from you. Send comments to folleym@si.edu.

—The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service exhibition team
## Contents

4 Exhibition Collaborators  
5 Technical Specifications  
6 Available on Disc  
7 What is Letterpress?  
8 Tools of the Trade  
9 What’s in a Name?  
10 Hatch’s Methodology Today  
11 Final Line Art Before Printing  
12 From Start to Finish  
13 A Necessary Move  
14 Hip Again  
15 A Utilitarian Craft  
16 On the Record: Hatch’s Documentary History  
17 A Legacy of Good Design  
18 Selected Clients  
19 Glossary of Terms
The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 50 years. SITES connects Americans to their cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work, and play.

www.sites.si.edu

Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
The mission of the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum is to identify and preserve the evolving history and traditions of country music and to educate its audiences. Functioning as a local history museum and as an international arts organization, the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum serves visiting and non-visiting audiences including fans, students, scholars, members of the music industry, and the general public—in the Nashville area, the nation, and the world.

www.countrymusichalloffame.com

Hatch Show Print
Hatch Show Print is one of the oldest working letterpress print shops in America. Now owned and operated by the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum, Hatch Show Print not only maintains the original, hand-carved wood blocks and massive, old letter presses for producing restrikes of classic designs, but also creates new art that continues the traditions of this venerable firm, begun in 1879.

http://www.countrymusichalloffame.com/site/experience-hatch.aspx
We have saved the following documents as both low- and high-resolution files. If you'd like to print these pages out on 8½ x 11” paper, select the low-resolution.pdf.

If you’d like to enlarge these pages as posters (12.75 x 16.5”), use the high-resolution version. Professional printers are best equipped to handle large jobs, so contact a vendor in your area.
Available on Disc

In the back of this publication, you will find three CDs.

Disc 1
Poster Files
Production-ready poster files available in low and high-resolution formats.

Disc 2
Hatch Show Print Gallery Music
Curated by Jeff Place and engineered by Pete Reiniger
Smithsonian Institution Folkways Collection

All selections were chosen to complement posters in the exhibition, American Letterpress: The Art of Hatch Show Print.


Disc 3
A Tour of Hatch Show Print
An eight-minute video that explores this historic poster shop in Nashville, Tennessee. Narration by Hatch Show Print curator and general manager Jim Sherraden with easy-to-follow visuals about the production and printing processes. Produced by the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum in collaboration with the staff at Hatch Show Print.
What is Letterpress?

Letterpress refers to the printing process of inking and impressing letters. Generally, this term is used by professional and amateur printers who use metal and wood type to prepare textual documents such as broadsides and posters.

Imagery can be included in a letterpress product, but in order to print text and image together, the image is prepared at the same height as the type.

Simply put, this is a process where letters are pressed into paper with ink rolled in between.
Tools of the Trade

Pictured here is a selection of Will T. Hatch’s (1886-1952) woodcarving tools, including chisels, carving knives, and gouges. These basic instruments were usually used on relatively easy-to-carve basswood, poplar, or maple. Today, the surfaces carved at Hatch include basswood, birch-veneer plywood, and mounted-battleship linoleum (blocks made from solidified linseed oil).

A 1939 article described the Hatch woodcarving process as “a lot of careful chiseling and gouging . . . Instead of separate pieces of type set by hand, spaced, locked up, and made ready by printing, there is the whole thing—each letter carved out in relief—in one, big block of wood.”
Former Hatch bookkeeper Mai Cook Fulton, who started working at the print shop in 1934, had this to say: “I changed the name from C.R. & H.H. Hatch (the original name) to Hatch Show Print because of their slogan ‘We Crow About Our Good Work.’ I didn’t want people thinkin’ I worked in a hatchery.”

And it made sense. Hatch’s bread and butter has always been the promotion of the entertainment industry.

What’s in a Name?
Today, the Nashville shop prints and designs more than 600 print jobs a year.

Because designers and students are working with tangible materials and not a mouse and computer, brief sketches are often drawn so that artists can choose type and imagery that “fit” the style of the work.

Inspiration for designs comes from many places. In the old days, Will T. Hatch tore illustrations from magazines that might serve as a starting point for a new poster. Now, inspiration comes from both the artists’ imaginations and from the wealth of archival posters that line the walls of the shop.

Whatever the final concept, the artist creates the poster by hand-setting wood or metal type, pairing text with woodcut imagery (newly carved or from the archive), and locking all the elements down into frame. The entire frame is inked and moved across rollers that distribute the ink across the surface of the paper.

Before printing any job, Hatch creates a “proof,” or sample that allows the team to check spelling and layout.
This Airstream Trailer print was created by first drawing onto tracing paper, and then redrawing the image with carbon paper (in reverse) onto the wood block, where the non-printed areas were then cut away.
From Start to Finish

Posters like these were created as educational tools for Tennessee teachers.

Notice how the designers started with a “store-bought” image of George Washington and then reworked and essentially flattened the picture to make it a viable form for the letterpress.

* One of these images may not be suitable for enlargement. Contact SITES for additional information.
A Necessary Move

In its long history, Hatch Show Print moved seven times, from one storefront to another as necessitated by the economy and the growth of the business. In the late 1980s, it was time to move again. City planners and developers slated Hatch’s neighborhood, Nashville’s Fourth Street corridor, for demolition and new construction. Aware of Hatch’s status as a national landmark, planners worked with Gaylord Entertainment and the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum to keep Hatch intact, though the shop would have to move again.

Jim Sherraden, Hatch general manager since 1984, helped orchestrate a transplant of the Hatch shop to a 19th-century brick store building at 316 Broadway. As part of the new arrangement, and in the spirit of historical preservation and downtown revitalization, Gaylord Entertainment donated the complete Hatch archive of posters, business records, wood blocks, letter forms, and presses to the Country Music Foundation, which began to run the shop under its name.

* One of these images may not be suitable for enlargement. Contact SITES for additional information.
Hip Again

After the move, Hatch hosted a grand re-opening at its current home. Foot traffic increased—tourists, business people, celebrities, and graphic designers paid homage to Hatch’s nostalgic past and made purchases.

In the front of the shop, “restrikes,” hand-printed sheets from old blocks, were flying off the shelves. In the back of the shop, contemporary entertainers were ordering large quantities of posters to be sold by concession companies at concerts for acts ranging from blues great B.B. King to alternative rock musician Beck.

Hatch had finessed an entrepreneurial comeback. It happened that leaders in graphic design were, at the same time, looking to the pre-digital era for fresh inspiration. That put Hatch Show Print, a living 19th-century letterpress shop, back on the cutting edge of design.
A Utilitarian Craft

When you visit the Hatch shop, you will see hundreds of vintage posters lining the brick walls, but many of the oldest posters have not survived.

Since the shop changed locations so many times, it’s hard to say exactly what happened to the earliest prints. It’s also important to note that making posters is a utilitarian craft. A finished Hatch poster is a print product as much as it is a work of art—the product’s purpose is to promote an entertainer, a company, or an event.

Wood blocks were part of that utilitarian tradition. They were carved to be used again and again, year after year. Until recently, if a block was idle for too long (perhaps the entertainer retired, quit working, or went out of business), it was recycled and made into additional shelving for blocks that were being used. Some blocks were flipped over, sectioned, and carved into more wood type.

Today, the Hatch mantra is “preservation through production.” An old block can’t collect dust if it’s used on a regular basis.
Maintaining good financial records is crucial for any business. Hatch book-keeper Mai Cook Fulton did just that. “Every Saturday night, I would go across the parking lot and collect accounts from the entertainers,” she once recalled. “It was the only way you could get money from some of those folks!”

Hatch’s account books include personal expenses, appraisals, and the listings of nearly 1,200 letterpress carvings from the 1920s and ’30s. A hand-written note from blues singer Bessie Smith and files containing orders from Elvis Presley’s manager, Colonel Tom Parker, also survive in the archive.
In this digital age, there’s something very appealing about working with one’s hands, especially in graphic design where it seems everything is produced with the aid of a computer. Hatch has never gone to digital technology.

For some, Hatch’s legacy to the world of graphic design is a familiarity with the basics—a tangible and honest approach to the creative process using uncomplicated tools.

For others, like graphic design historian Alston Purvis, “the Hatch poster suggested broadsides from a bygone era while maintaining a contemporary aura of their own. Although there is no single style, they all retained the unpretentious stamp of Hatch Show Print. The art of Hatch Show Print seems to emanate from the printing process itself.”
Selected Clients

Over the years, Hatch Show Print has made posters, handbills, and window cards for some of the most significant individuals in American musical, political, and cultural history. Here are just a few:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roy Acuff</th>
<th>Coldplay</th>
<th>Emmylou Harris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louis Armstrong</td>
<td>Dave Matthews Band</td>
<td>Herbert Hoover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.B King</td>
<td>Bo Diddley</td>
<td>Etta James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beastie Boys</td>
<td>Bob Dylan</td>
<td>Waylon Jennings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Brown</td>
<td>Dwight D. Eisenhower</td>
<td>Jewel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cab Calloway</td>
<td>Duke Ellington</td>
<td>Jerry Lee Lewis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnny Cash</td>
<td>Merle Haggard</td>
<td>Loretta Lynn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jayne Mansfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bob Marley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Monroe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willie Nelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dolly Parton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearl Jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elvis Presley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R.E.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Red Hot Chili Peppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Rolling Stones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bessie Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bruce Springsteen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Squirrel Nut Zipper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Supremes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stevie Ray Vaughan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The White Stripes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hank Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Zappa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary of Terms

Bite: An irregular white spot on the edge of a printed page.

Brayer: A small hand-roller used to distribute ink.

Broadsheet: A large sheet printed on one side only, like a handbill or a poster.

Cabinet: A frame for holding type-cases enclosed on the sides and back to protect type from dust. Made in many different styles for printers’ use.

Case: A shallow wooden tray divided into compartments, in which type is placed for composing.

Circulars: A leaflet printed on one or more pages of note paper. A single leaf is a half-note; a folded sheet is a full-note.

Copy: The text or wording that appears on a page.

Font: A complete assortment of type of one size and face, containing a proportion of each letter, large and small, figures, etc.

Full Press: When printing is done on hand-presses, two people may operate it — one to roll the ink, the other to put in the sheet and pull the impression; this is working a full press.

Handbill: A small printed advertisement or notice, usually on newsprint or book paper, and distributed for free to persons on the street, left at doors, or posted on walls or telephone polls.

Ink: The colored fluid or substance used in writing, printing, stamping, etc. Printing ink is a mixture of boiled oil and black or colored pigments. Unlike writing ink, which is fluid, printing ink resembles thick paint. Linseed and nut oils are used for the finer printing inks.

Ink Up: To apply to the rollers and distribute sufficient ink for any purpose.

Ink Knife: For handling printing ink, as in taking it from a can or barrel; it has a handle and a blade with a square end.
Make-ready: Waste paper used to test ink color and registration. Multiple passes through the press layer different images and colors on top of each other. Makereadies are essentially tools that help the printer get the final job just right.

Monoprint: A single and deliberate art print that conveys the same style and feel as a makeready.

Offset Lithography: Metal plates that carry both the image and non-image areas on the same level (unlike letterpress where areas are raised to catch ink). The transfer of ink is controlled by the principle that oil and water don’t mix. Image areas are photographically transferred to thin metal plates which are treated chemically to accept oil-based ink but repel water on the image areas. Conversely, non-image areas accept water but repel the oil-based ink. A plate first contacts rollers of a clean solution or water and then is inked by other rollers. The oil-based ink “sticks” to the image area. The inked image is then transferred from the plate to a rubber blanket. The rubber blanket then transfers the image onto the paper’s surface.

Photo-engraving: The process of making, by means of the chemical action of light upon film, engraved plates or blocks for printing.

Press: Machine or apparatus used to press the paper on the type, engraving, or plate.

Proof: After type or images are set, their accuracy must be verified before a print can be made. For this purpose a trial impression is taken so that the composition may be examined and needed corrections made.

Restrike: The inking and reprinting of a poster using the same vintage blocks that were used in the original version.

Sorts: The letters in the boxes of a case. The term “out of sorts,” refers to being short certain letters in the case.

Stock: Paper, cardboard, or other material upon which printing is done.

Typography: The art or process of printing from movable type.

Typesetting: Involves positioning text. Before the advent of desktop publishing, and in letterpress printing, moveable type is composited by hand for each printed page.

Window Cards: Prints that are approximately 14 x 22”, originally placed in theater and store windows. The most popular size and form at Hatch, they are less expensive than full-sized posters and are printed on heavy card stock. Jim Sherraden, curator and manager at Hatch Show Print, notes that window cards are “large enough to catch the eye in a window, but small enough not to hide whatever else needs to be seen.” This format has always been very popular with entertainers.

Woodcut: An engraving on wood, or a print from such an engraving.

Woodcut Paper: A soft paper of fine fiber and smooth finish surface, lightly sized or unsized, which readily takes an impression of ink.

Wood Engraving: The art of cutting designs in relief upon a polished block of wood. A print made from a block of this kind. For fine work, boxwood is usually employed, and the engraving is done on the end of the grain.

Images courtesy Hatch Show Print

Special thanks to Jim Sherraden of Hatch Show Print and Joan Boudreau, curator, Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Division of Graphic Art, for their contributions.

Please visit http://www.shows2go.si.edu/hatch_show_print for more information on select posters and to record your comments about the exhibition.

Thank you!

© 2009 Smithsonian Institution
Design by Studio A