

apart under pressure during printing. Harder linoleums are more difficult to cut but allow for a lot of detail and hold up to a longer print run. If you wish, you can use a clothes iron to heat up the block and soften it before carving.

Knives and gouges with either V- or U-shaped cutting heads are used on linoleum. Wide U-shaped or C-shaped gouges are used to clear broader areas. Speedball offers inexpensive sets of linoleum-carving tools with several types of blades, but these blades are made of soft steel, which is impossible to sharpen. The Speedball tools are appropriate for school students, but professional printmakers prefer hard steel gouges (with wooden handles) that can be sharpened on a sharpening stone.

Single-Color (Black and White) Linocuts

There are three main approaches to creating a single-color linocut:

1. A linear approach, in which the image is created by carving out lines that will remain unprinted, or white, when the block is printed.
2. A three-dimensional or positive/negative approach, in which line is ignored in favor of bold shape cutting, emphasizing the form through negative and positive spaces. A shape can be defined by clearing the areas around it with a gouge or, oppositely, by carving out the shape itself and leaving the surrounding areas intact.

OTHER TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Besides linoleum blocks and cutters, you'll need some other tools and materials for linocut printing:

- › 2B graphite pencils and/or fine Sharpie pens for drawing on the block
- › Tracing or transfer paper for transferring a design to the block
- › Mylar sheets for color registration with multiple blocks
- › Brayers for applying ink to the block
- › Oil-based relief ink from Speedball, Hanco, Graphic Chemical & Ink Co., or Gamblin. These makers also produce water-based inks for linocut.
- › Printing paper. Paper for relief should be smooth, without texture. Suitable papers are made by BFK Rives, Somerset, Fabriano, and Arches (the Arches Cover line). Oriental rice papers can also be used for linocut.

3. A tonal approach, in which tones are introduced and various textures are obtained by making many small cuts on the block. Tones can be achieved through cross-hatching and parallel lines cut with a small V-shaped tool and can be varied by moving the lines closer together or farther apart.

French artist Jacques Moiroud does large-scale relief linocuts based on photographs he takes of his models. Choosing an image that inspires him, he then makes a linear drawing, the same size as the intended print, on Mylar with a graphite pencil (2B or higher). Opposite are the steps he followed when carving and printing the monochrome linocut *Timbuktu*.



Photos in this series by Jacques Moiroud.



Monochrome Linocut

- 1 Moiroud placed the Mylar drawing face-down on the linoleum block and traced it, transferring the graphite to the linoleum. He then redrew the image on the linoleum using a fine-tipped Sharpie.
- 2 He then carved the linoleum using various sizes of carving blades: #1 is good for detail work; #3 is handy for clearing out large white areas.
- 3 Moiroud used a palette knife to spread some oil-based relief ink on the inking table, then rolled out a thin film of ink with a brayer. Once the brayer was charged with ink, he coated the surface of the linoleum block evenly, rolling the brayer across it in many directions.
- 4 He then placed the inked block face up on the bed of an etching press and laid the paper on top. He covered the paper with a large Plexiglas sheet and pulled the first proof. The photo below, left, shows Moiroud lifting the print off the block. The final print of *Timbuktu* appears below.



Jacques Moiroud,
Timbuktu, 2009, linocut,
24 x 32 inches (61 x 81.3 cm).
Courtesy of the artist.