



INSTITUTE OF ART AND DESIGN  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities

# Color Woodcut

WOODCUT PRINTING USING MULTI COLOR

**Mubeen Ahmed**

MFA M.Phil. (Printmaking) Punjab University

**Lecturer (Visiting) Sargodha University**

# Color Woodcut

- ▶ Colored woodcuts first appeared in ancient China. The oldest known are three Buddhist images dating to the 10th century. European woodcut prints with colored blocks were invented in Germany in 1508, and are known as chiaroscuro woodcuts (see below). However, color did not become the norm, as it did in Japan in the ukiyo-e and other forms.
- ▶ In Europe and Japan, color woodcuts were normally only used for prints rather than book illustrations. In China, where the individual print did not develop until the nineteenth century, the reverse is true, and early color woodcuts mostly occur in luxury books about art, especially the more prestigious medium of painting.
- ▶ The first known example is a book on ink-cakes printed in 1606, and color technique reached its height in books on painting published in the seventeenth century.
- ▶ Notable examples are Hu Zhengyuan's *Treatise on the Paintings and Writings of the Ten Bamboo Studio* of 1633,[7] and the *Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual* published in 1679 and 1701.

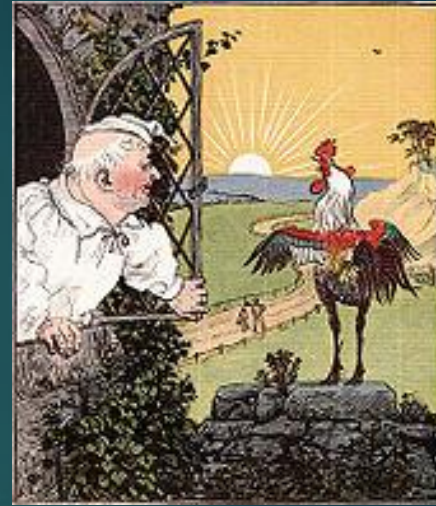


# Japanese color technique

- ▶ In Japan color technique, called nishiki-e in its fully developed form, spread more widely, and was used for prints, from the 1760s on. Text was nearly always monochrome, as were images in books, but the growth of the popularity of ukiyo-e brought with it demand for ever-increasing numbers of colors and complexity of techniques. By the nineteenth century most artists worked in color. The stages of this development were:
  - ▶ Sumizuri-e (墨摺り絵, "ink printed pictures") - monochrome printing using only black ink
  - ▶ Benizuri-e (紅摺り絵, "crimson printed pictures") - red ink details or highlights added by hand after the printing process green was sometimes used as well
  - ▶ Tan-e (丹絵) - orange highlights using a red pigment called tan
  - ▶ Aizuri-e (藍摺り絵, "indigo printed pictures"), Murasaki-e (紫絵, "purple pictures"), and other styles that used a single color in addition to, or instead of, black ink
  - ▶ Urushi-e (漆絵) - a method that used glue to thicken the ink, emboldening the image; gold, mica and other substances were often used to enhance the image further. Urushi-e can also refer to paintings using lacquer instead of paint; lacquer was very rarely if ever used on prints.
  - ▶ Nishiki-e (錦絵, "brocade pictures") - a method that used multiple blocks for separate portions of the image, so a number of colors could achieve incredibly complex and detailed images; a separate block was carved to apply only to the portion of the image designated for a single color. Registration marks called kentō (見当) ensured correspondence between the application of each block.

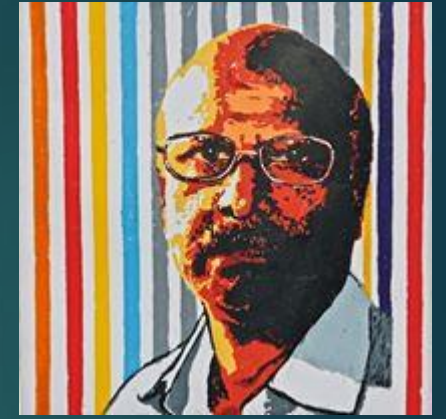
# New methods of color woodcut

- ▶ A number of different methods of color printing using woodcut (technically Chromoxylography) were developed in Europe in the 19th century. In 1835, George Baxter patented a method using an intaglio line plate (or occasionally a lithograph), printed in black or a dark color, and then overprinted with up to twenty different colors from woodblocks.
- ▶ Edmund Evans used relief and wood throughout, with up to eleven different colors, and latterly specialized in illustrations for children's books, using fewer blocks but overprinting non-solid areas of color to achieve blended colors. Artists such as Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway were influenced by the Japanese prints now available and fashionable in Europe to create a suitable style, with flat areas of color.
- ▶ In the 20th century, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner of the Die Brücke group developed a process of producing colored woodcut prints using a single block applying different colors to the block with a brush *à la poupée* and then printing (halfway between a woodcut and a monotype).[9] A remarkable example of this technique is the 1915 Portrait of Otto Müller woodcut print from the collection of the British Museum.[10]



# Pakistani Woodcut artist Mahboob Ali

- ▶ Mahboob Ali, is perhaps the only artist who has devoted his entire career to woodcut – an ancient technique of printmaking.
- ▶ A native Lahore-ite, and a graduate of the National College of Arts, he has not gained immense recognition at home and abroad.
- ▶ In his own words, “this medium is very difficult, laborious and requires patience.” However, Mahboob Ali has given new dimensions to his craft by increasing the number of colors [here] used printmaking to over 50 now. He carves and paints without the use of machines.
- ▶ His labor of love has popularized this medium in Pakistan now. But his real forte, in my opinion is recording the rich heritage of Lahore’s walled city, otherwise a dying space of cultural history.
- ▶ Old Lahore lives within his work and interacts with modernity creating a dreamy ambience. Mahboob says, “I have made the culture heritage of Lahore, as exemplified in its gates and streets, my theme. An attempt has been made to capture the dramatic effects of changing light which reflect both hope and despair at different times



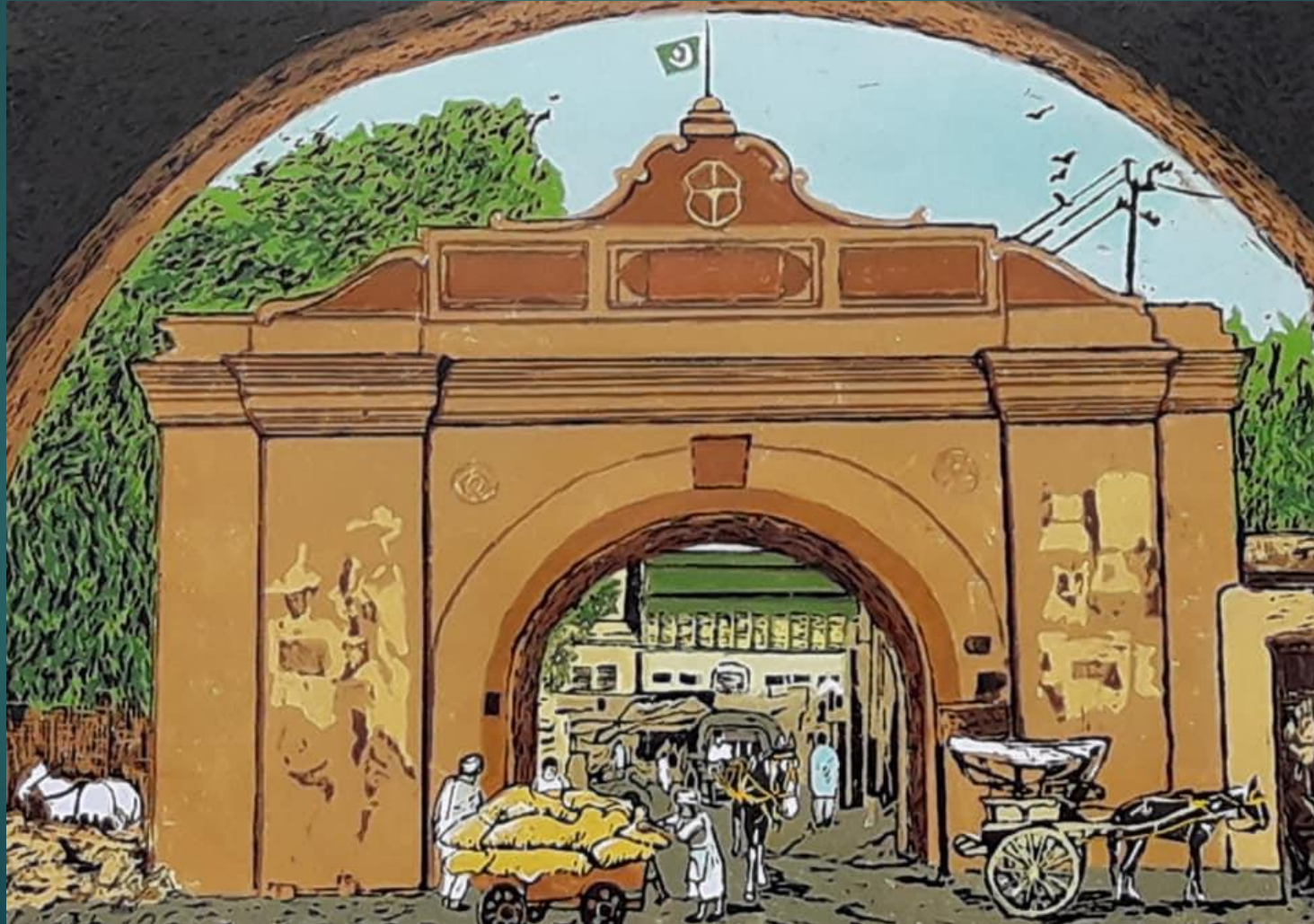
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**Thank You**