

Screen printing, screenprinting, silkscreen printing, serigraphy are ways to identify an essential simple process with a long history in both art and industry. Along with its variety of names screen-printing is also a history of complexity in intent, technique and artistic use.

As a stencil process that blocks areas so another allows ink to pass through, screen printing is generally credited to China during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE). Other Asian countries, such as Japan, would further add innovation in combination with block printing and hand applied paints.

One advantage is that screen printing does not need a press, as in etching, inks can be adjusted for multiple surfaces from paper to ceramics and the application surface does not need to remain flat. Silkscreen printing refers to the original mesh used with a stencil; nylon, polyester and metal can replace the screen for the applied stencil. Whatever the choice of screen, it is most often affixed to a metal or wooden frame.

The Englishman Samuel Simon patented the screen printed form most familiar in the Western world in 1907. While Europe was introduced to the process in the 18th century, it would take the affordability of silk mesh and commercial use of the process to make it more available.

Simon's use of his patented process was primarily used for printing expensive wall coverings on silk, linen, paper and other fine fabrics.

Early in 1910, along with photography, screen printers began experimenting with photo reactive chemical processes. Roy Beck, Charles Peters and Edward Owen are credited with the beginnings of a myriad of sensitizing processes still being refined by artists and industry.

A group that formed the National Serigraphic Society first used "serigraphy" as a term to describe fine art created with this technique. This shift served to legitimized this technique in its two separate applications. The term came from the Latin "sericum" (silk) and the Greek "graphien" (draw or write). This distinction will lead to the development of the prominence known in the United States of "Pop Art" and the artist Andy Warhol.

Screen printing continues to adapt with the digital age with DTG (direct to garment) and DTS (direct to screen) and still accommodate the artist chosen inks and hand squeegeed artisan produced print runs.

With its adaptations to technology screen printing remains an innovative method for an artist to work with scale, color and surface. In the words of Andy Warhol, “It was all so simple, quick and chancy. I was thrilled with it.”