Test Four: Inking the Roller System

For this test run, Maria and I inked the Vandercook roller system with black Hawthorne, Caligo, and Akua inks. We printed type-high linocuts in order to obtain a better understanding of how the ink transfers and lays on the page (the 10-point text previously printed was difficult to "read.")

The Hawthorne again produced very satisfying results. The ink was modified with a substantial amount of transparent base, but it still printed the most rich and intense of all the inks (also due to its hue: "intense black.") Because we were working with it for a briefer period of time, the ink was easier to clean this time around. I cleaned one lino block with vegetable oil followed by vinegar and one with dish soap (NO water) followed by water. Because most of the ink wiped off easily with a dry shop towel first, both clean up methods worked fine--for the blocks. The rollers, on the other hand, did not respond at all to soap. Maria cleaned these and can testify further.

Maria's results: Clean up so far was a bit difficult with Hawthorne, it was recommended to clean it with dish soap and water and we haven't figured out which way to make it work, since the dish soap doesn't seem to want to bind with the ink. So instead we cleaned it off the rollers with oil and then with EP67 following with water. We also tried the dish soap after the oil and then water with a sponge which seemed to work ok, not great though. I put talc on the rollers after just in case to pull out any leftover substances. When we cleaned the linoblocks it seemed that dish soap and water worked the best. But it was difficult to see if that was really the case since the blocks where blackened with sharpie before they were carved. So we weren't sure if they where clean or the sharpie was coming off from scrubbing them. We also tried oil and vinegar on the lino and it didn't seem to work very well.

If you would like to use Hawthorn ink, follow the oil/EP67 ("ecopure")/water method. You may apply a small amount of talc to the rollers to pull any extra moisture out of them (do not overdo it).

The Caligo ink proves much easier to work with as a relief ink than as intaglio. It, too, yielded satisfying results, though requiring a bit more proofing and trouble-shooting than the Hawthorne. As seemed to be the case in hand-rolling the ink, Caligo proved to require a substantial amount of ink on the rollers in order to print well. Once the proper amount was obtained, the prints were quite rich (the exact amount can only be discerned through proofing). Clean-up was easier than Hawthorne. Not as much ink wipes up with a dry towel, but the rest may be removed with dish soap only, followed by water. Again, Maria can testify to roller clean up.

Summary of Maria's results: Wipe as much ink off with a dry rag as possible, followed by straight dish soap (no water) on a rag, followed by a damp rag to wipe up the dish soap residue, concluding with thorough drying/talc.

Akua ink required the most trouble-shooting, but once we had the system properly inked, it too produced rich results. It seems the newly formulated ink (the carbon black hue at least) is actually too stiff! Though the ink has a buttery consistency out of the jar, it does stand in stiff peaks rather than "pooling" as the Caligo and Hawthorne do. The initial prints were therefore grainy because the ink did not take well to the paper. We added a small drop of Akua blending medium modifier to loosen the ink, and this seems to be the solution, though further testing is required because we added this modified ink

to the roller system which already contained unmodified ink. Clean-up, however, was definitely smoothest with Akua. Soapy water is all the is required for both the blocks and the rollers. This is followed, of course, by thorough drying with shop towels.

Overall, it is quite promising that any of these inks can be applied to the roller system without any serious obstacles.