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Block printing

Block Printing

Some of the earliest printing on tiles in the 1750s may have been done using a block of wood. The impression was transferred from the raised parts of a block which may have been of wood or metal. It is not certain whether the transfer was done by glue bat or by tissue paper.

Textiles were printed in multicolor by a series of blocks, each having a raised area corresponding to the part of the design to be printed in one color. Each block in turn printed its color, one on top of the other, until the design was complete. In 1835 a calico printer William Wainwright Potts joined forces with William Machin of the Waterloo Pottery, Burslem to file a patent, no.6938, ‘an improved method or process of manufacturing patterns in one or more colors to be transferred to earthenware, porcelain, china, glass and other similar substances.’ This adapted the block printing of the calico printers to printing tissue paper for transfer to ceramics. It was basically a cold process, although the inventors suggested printing the outline from a (heated) engraved plate before adding the colors from the (cold) blocks.

In 1848 two former apprentices of George Baxter, FWM Collins and Alfred Reynolds, patented a similar process for printing a series of colors in sequence over each other from a set of printing plates, one for each color. It was known either as block printing or as New Press printing.

Details of block printed designs.
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