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### Meaning in Print: Exploring the Meaning of Making in the Print Shop

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# MEANING IN PRINT: EXPLORING THE MEANING OF MAKING IN THE PRINT SHOP

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How do we think of our relationships to tools and materials in an age of massive digital technological innovation and proliferation? By using printmaking as a case study, I attempt to understand the interplay between digital technology and how making is navigated by practitioners. Based on semi-structured interviews with printmakers, bookmakers, and different types of craftspeople in the U.S. and Germany, I argue that printmaking can be rethought around the boundaries of technology, high art, and craft via three unique lenses: labor, making, and visual expression and application. To understand the organization of labor in print shops, I draw on anthropological theories of kinship, especially Marshall Sahlins' "mutuality of being" framework, to demonstrate how meaning is made through a process of creation and coordination. I approach "making" via Bourdieu's concept of habitus and practice theory, arguing that making in the print shop is a type of embodied practice experienced through small repetitions and coordination with machinery, which acts as an agentive force that also bears its own unique mark. Finally, I explore visual expression and application by looking beyond the boundaries of the print shop, where practitioners engage in making as part of various art- and craft-oriented occupations. Far from hindering 'authenticity' or 'tradition,' I find that digital technology helps fine-tune their decision-making even as they combine the digital with handwork to produce desired aesthetics and effects. This thesis achieves a holistic view of how printmaking can activate our understandings of what the handmade means in an increasingly digitized world. Being a 'maker' can be carried out successfully in many capacities, and practitioners are not afraid of continuing to move from more traditional methods into newer digital methods. My research thus contributes to and advances an expanding field of anthropology that champions making from the perspectives of people that manipulate and engage materially with their surroundings.