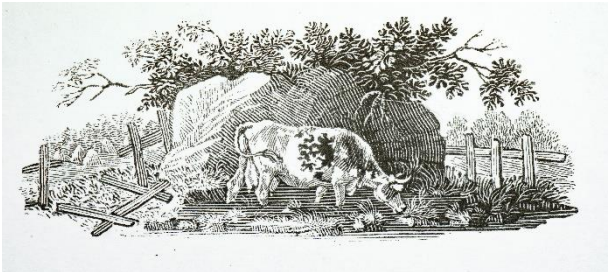
A Collection of Printing from Woodblocks

on a diversity of papers

printed from the original woodblocks

by Graham Williams



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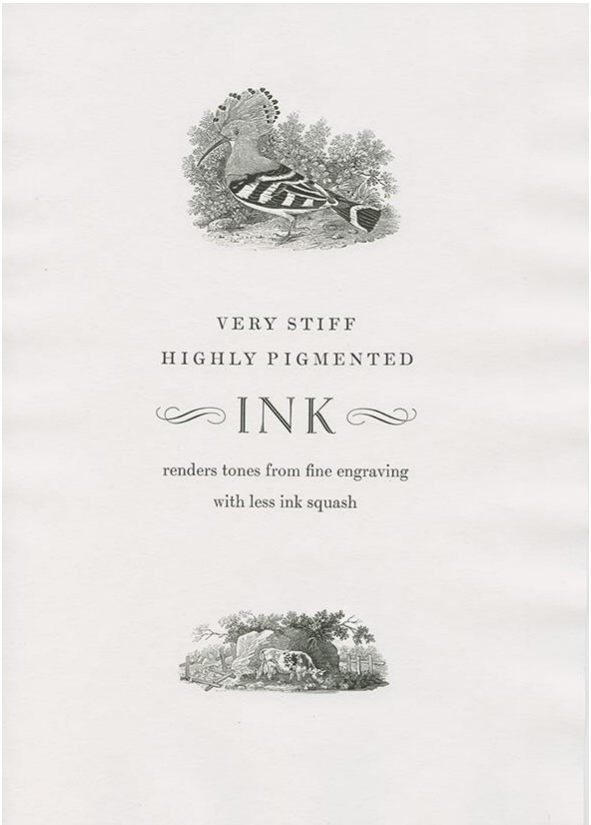
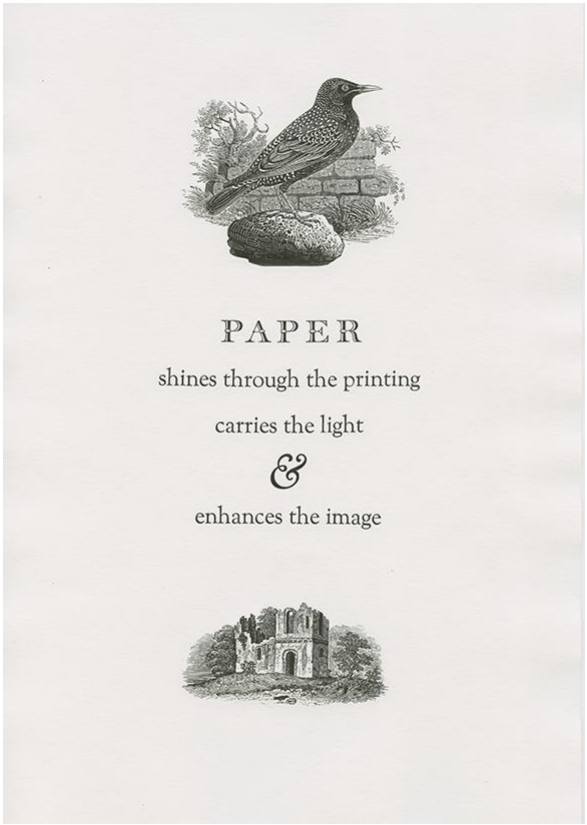
the text of this prospectus is set in Book Antiqua

THIS COLLECTION OF PRINTS is the result of a long preoccupation with everything involved in giving life to woodblocks. It began with Thomas Bewick's blocks and expanded to include older blocks and contemporary wood engravings. There is a real delight in seeing an image well printed and sitting happily on carefully chosen paper.

The printers of old considered woodblocks very difficult to print well. Many suggested that if the printer didn't have 'an artist's eye' the results would be disappointing.

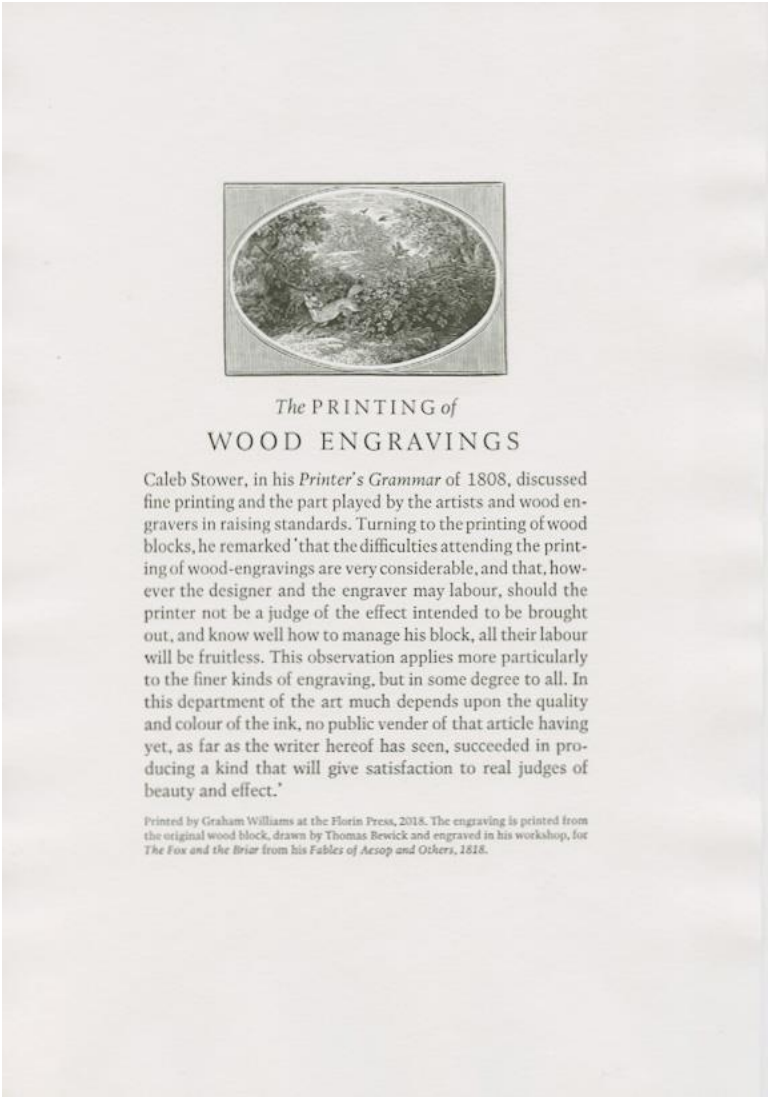




This exploration of printing woodblocks includes Thomas Bewick's lowered blocks, this was his innovative response to eighteenth-century printing problems. One outcome of the research was my recent publication *Thomas Bewick & the performance of woodblocks.*

During the course of writing that book many ink recipes and techniques had to be tried out on a handpress. I sought that magic moment when a sheet of paper peels back from the block and fulfills what it promised.

Some fifty-five years ago I printed my first wood engraving on tissue paper, it was awful on anything else. This collection is the result of a search that began then. I wanted to print on papers that could be handled, bound in a book, and contributed to the image. Paper makes all of the highlights and part of the tones and it surrounds the image making the field it sits in. When I planned this collection I chose handmade, mould-made and machine made papers, and both old and contemporary woodblocks with different challenges.



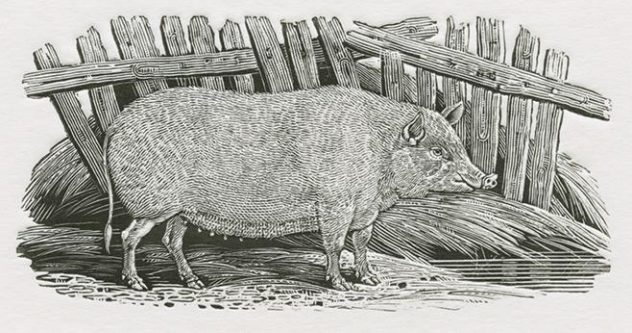
The PRINTING *of*

WOOD ENGRAVINGS

Caleb Stower, in his *Printer's Grammar* of 1808, discussed fine printing and the part played by the artists and wood engravers in raising standards. Turning to the printing of wood blocks, he remarked 'that the difficulties attending the printing of wood-engravings are very considerable, and that, however the designer and the engraver may labour, should the printer not be a judge of the effect intended to be brought out, and know well how to manage his block, all their labour will be fruitless. This observation applies more particularly to the finer kinds of engraving, but in some degree to all. In this department of the art much depends upon the quality and colour of the ink, no public vender of that article having yet, as far as the writer hereof has seen, succeeded in producing a kind that will give satisfaction to real judges of beauty and effect.'

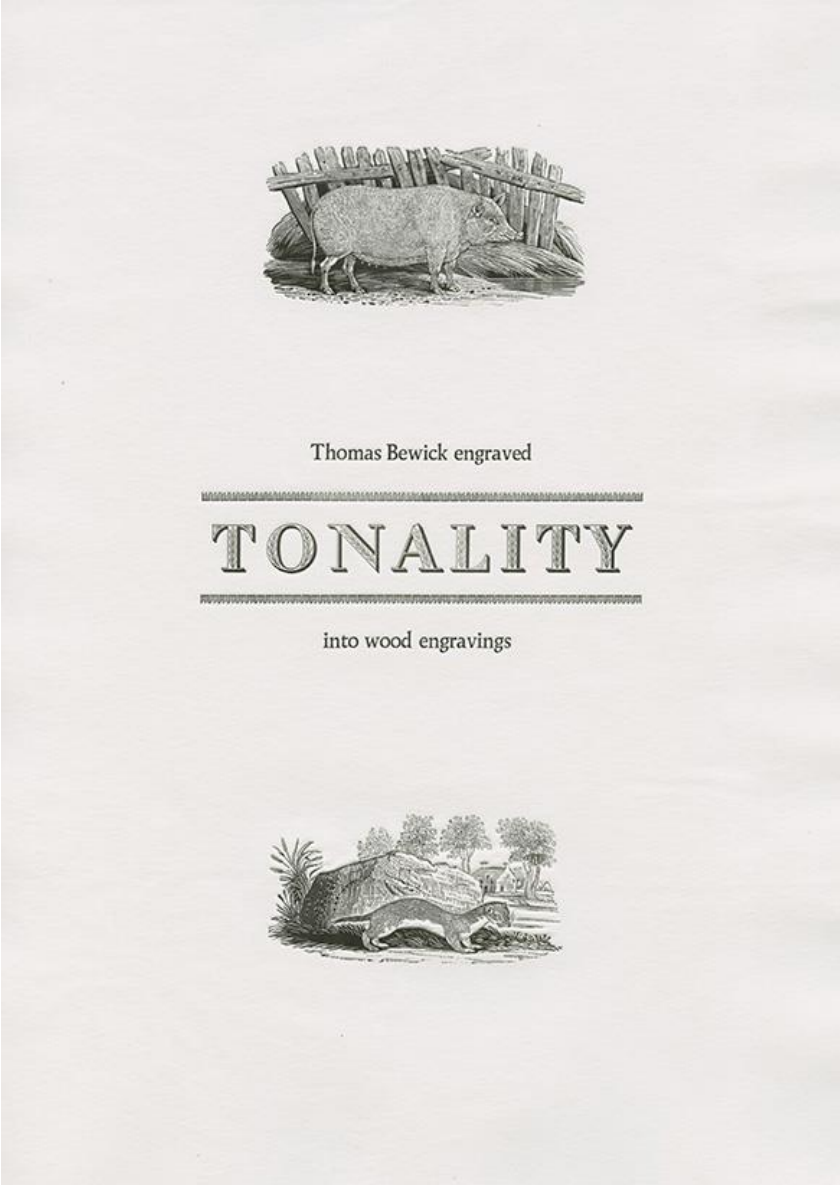
Printed by Graham Williams at the Florin Press, 2018. The engraving is printed from the original wood block, drawn by Thomas Bewick and engraved in his workshop, for *The Fox and the Briar* from his *Fables of Aesop and Others, 1818.*

A separate book, *Understanding Paper,* includes the assessment of thirty-three of these papers for their suitability, inherent qualities and longevity.



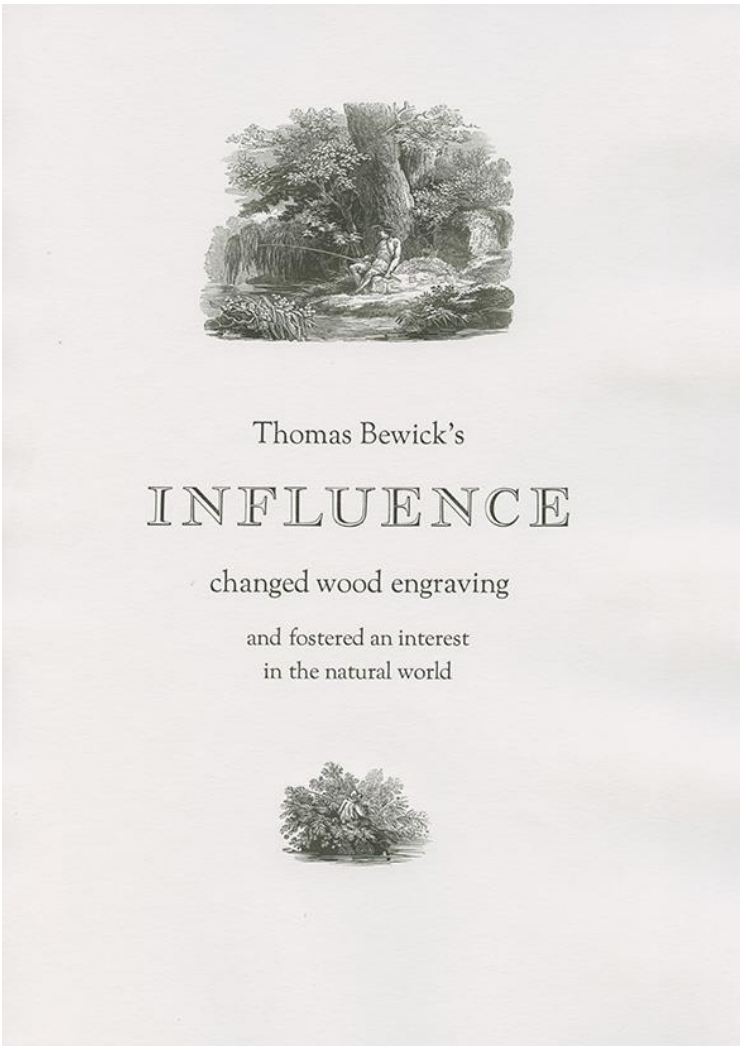
Wood engravings can stand alone, but they can also be combined with text. I found a quote for the the first forme, that was about the difficulties of printing wood engravings. The other short texts are my brief statements, handset in complimentary typefaces.

This is more than a display of well printed wood engravings. It displays the qualities that come from printing with good stiff inks on a wide variety of dampened papers.

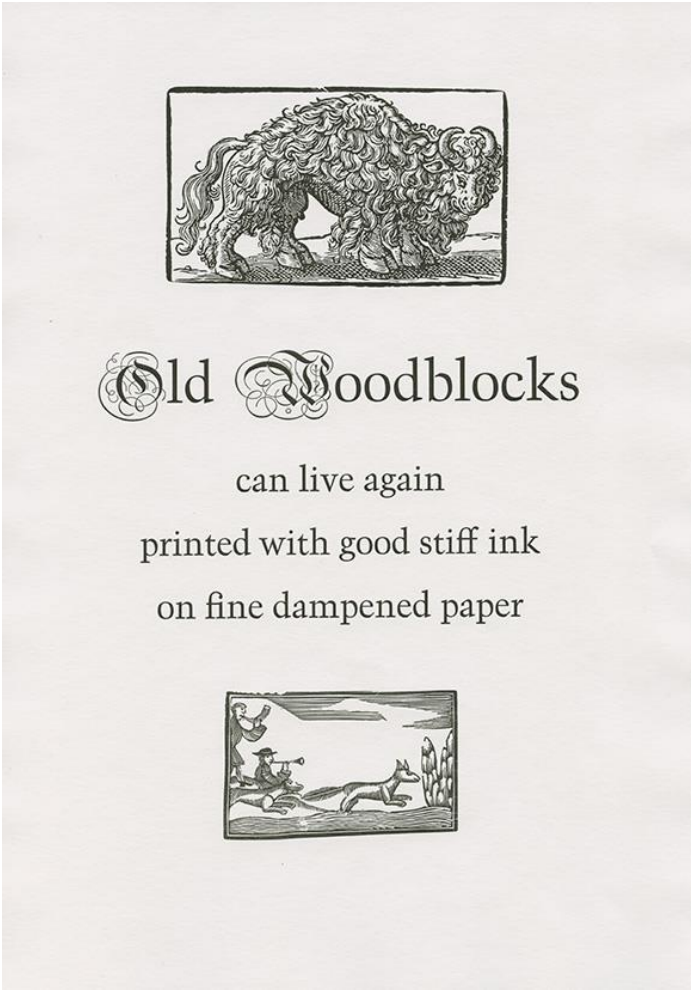


Comparison is the best way to understand the different qualities that paper brings to a print. A single paper can vary

from white to cream, dull to bright depending only on what other papers are laid to overlap it, and this varies again under different light sources. What works to print from Thomas Bewick's blocks will also work for older blocks, and be relevant for contemporary wood engraving as well. This collection includes nine different designs. The leaves, printed on a diversity of papers, encourage an exploration of how the same image changes from one paper to another.



Every example has been printed by hand using printing inks that have been altered or made from the old ingredients. All the leaves are A4. The eight page hand printed *Notes* and labels have a further six Bewick engravings and seven Florin Press devices by five wood engravers – Simon Brett, Peter Forster, John O'Connor, Monica Poole and Graham Williams. The text includes an introduction, a description of each woodblock and a list of all the papers in the collection.

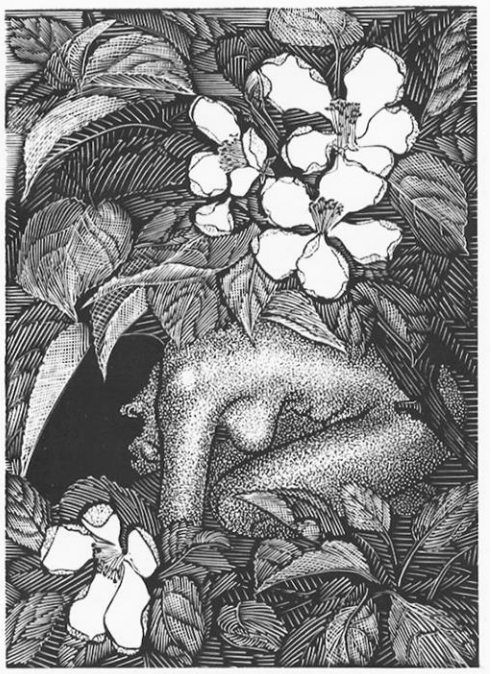


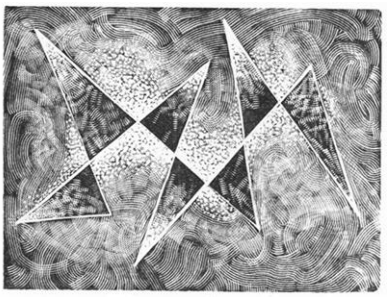
This woodblock was probably engraved about 1801 when Ireland joined the United Kingdom. It is full of subtle symbolism that makes it fascinating to ponder over.

don't expect a
REVOLUTION

continue to call for
CHANGE

A BEWICK SCROWL
One further design, not illustrated, has a minimum of printing that includes one Bewick ornament from the first edition of *History of British Birds,* 1797. The printing surrounds large watermarks in two different papers.



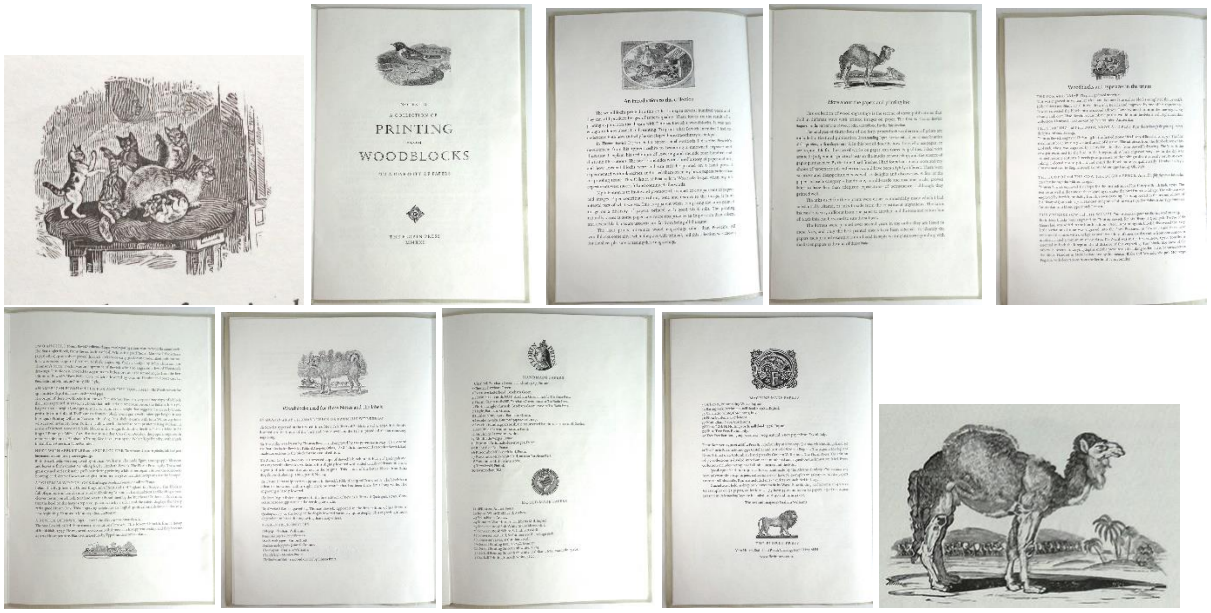


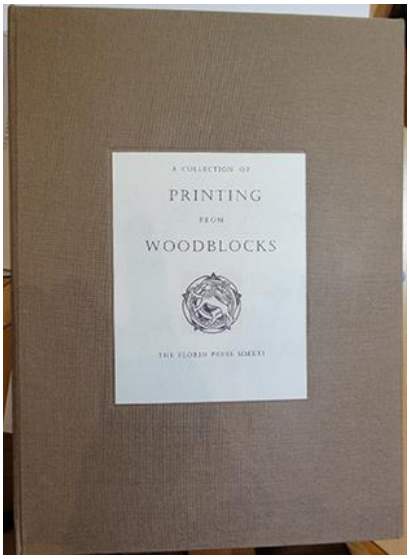
the selection of

paper & printing ink

is of great importance
for contemporary
woodblocks

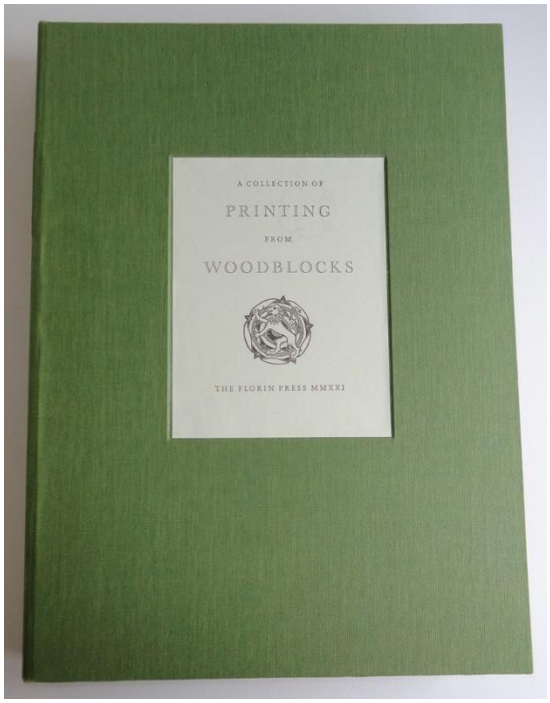
THE NOTES

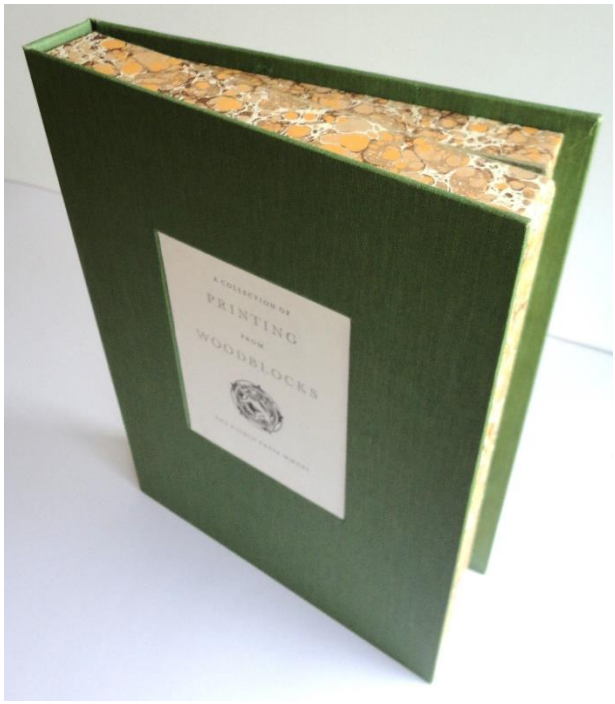




The edition of seventy-five collections is divided into four parts. Every collection includes multiple examples of all nine designs on a diversity of papers, the hand printed eight page Notes *plus cover, the titling label on the front board and a limitation label signed and numbered by the printer.*

Sixty collections numbered 16 – 75 are each contained in a drop back box made by The Wayte Bindery, covered in book cloth titled in gold on the spine, with both printed labels as illustrated here. 315mm x 235mm.
Collections numbered 41 - 75 contain 35 examples on 20 different papers. £485.00.
Collections numbered 16-40 contain 61 examples on 31 different papers. £865.00.





Fifteen special collections numbered 1 – 15 are each contained in a drop back box made by the Abrams Bindery, covered in book cloth and marbled paper with a morocco spine label, and both printed labels. 330mm x 245mm. Of these, ten collections numbered 6-15 contain 78 examples on 36 different papers. £1,355.00. Five collections numbered 1-5 contain 96 examples on 40 different papers. £1,995.00

A copy of the standard edition of *Understanding Paper* will be included with every collection numbered 41 – 75 and the hardbound edition with collections 1 – 15.

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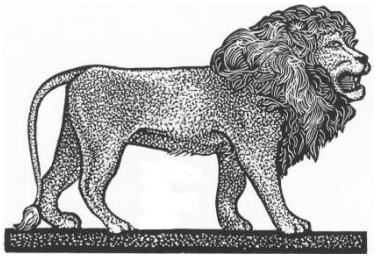
Copies available on the website www.florinpress.com



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