

What's unexpected about this thing you just made?

While somewhat anticipated, it was still unexpected to see how every print was different from the other; even as the illustrations, settings and colours remained the same - each print was quite distinct in its texture and quality.

What do you understand better or differently about your tool or medium now?

I understand technical aspects of the tool better now; for example, I was unaware that it was even possible to manually adjust the printer for different layers (masters) of the artwork to align more closely. I also have a more developed understanding of some of the terms and "words" associated with the technology.

Trials with the machine also lead me to believe that the risograph is inherently iterative in the way that it would be difficult to get a perfect (ideal) print without a few trials (iterations).

Did it pose a particular technical challenge?

The technical challenges risograph poses are based on knowledge of the tool - using specific softwares and requiring technical awareness mean that it is not particularly beginner friendly.

What kind of output or knowledge does this tool or medium favor?

The tool definitely favours print in large quantities. It also expects a certain extent of knowledge of colour theory and/ or colour interaction.

What relationship does it have to graphic or communication design?

As a form of printing technology, the risograph seems to share quite an evident relationship with graphic or communication design - it works as a tool to create physical artwork that is textured, vivid and "imperfect".

In *Xerography, Publics, and Counterpublics*, Kate Eichhorn writes of the specific independent print culture formed by the proliferation of xerography and the subsequent design of posters, public notices and eventually, zines. The text meticulously traces the story of the copier or xerox machine as a creative medium for artists and activists (Eichhorn, 2016). Eichhorn establishes how xerographic production enabled access to both public spaces as well as discourse outside the dominant publishing systems. (“...xerography helped people imagine and realize publics and counterpublics that operate along a startlingly different axis—where the possibility to express and circulate opinions is infinitely expanded.”)

The risograph today perhaps functions similarly, albeit in a considerably less accessible way. However, as a duplicator, the risograph potentially offers an independent, self-sufficient means of production (Prader, 2022) and is increasingly used by designers, activists, and educators. The riso machine extends the lineage of the xerox machine, while introducing a materially complex surface that is characterized by distinctive textures, misregistration and colour interaction.

Eichhorn concludes her argument by establishing the importance of xerography specifically to “people whose lives have never fit clearly into established notions of the private or public spheres.” Hence, the role of printing technology in resisting or facilitating social change becomes apparent. Legibility within print, similar to our access to publishing systems, is not neutral, and is instead determined by access to reproduction technologies.

In my risograph work, I use texture density, scale and layering to produce conditional legibility. Here I attempt to look at *legibility* in two distinct ways: the first, our literal perception of print as legible and the second, from the sociological perspective of legibility as described in James C. Scott’s book, *Seeing Like a State* (Scott, 1998). Rather than treating clarity as a desired design outcome, the prints explore how visibility can be partial or withheld - reflecting not only legibility as a means of control (by the state), but the ways in which minority identities or counterpublic discourses often exist outside “recognition”. A process intrinsic to risography is taking test prints; these prints, often taken on used sheets of paper or other test prints, create an interesting interaction and layers of concealment. Even though they are of the same material, they create an illusion of numerous prints and reinforce questions of legibility.

Thus, in this way, risograph becomes not only a method of reproduction or duplication, but a practice in which legibility and visibility can be actively negotiated through the print itself.

In Xerography, Publics, and Counterpublics

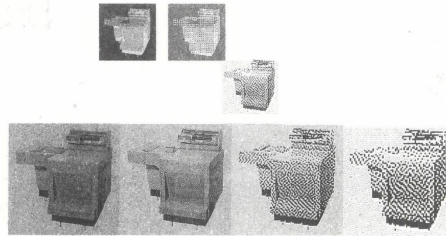
Xerography, Publics, and Counterpublics

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The first Xerox machine (Xerox 914), introduced in 1959

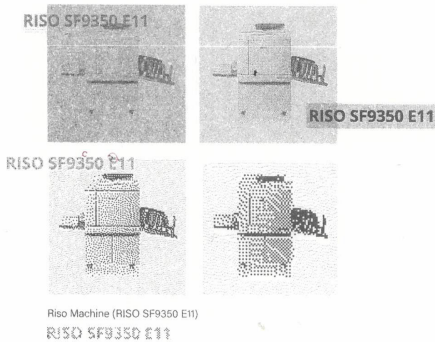
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Printed using risograph, black ink on Munken Pure Rough 120gsm

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