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The Master Printer’s Labor: Crafting the Color Art Lithograph in Fin-de-Siècle France

Le travail du maître imprimeur : La fabrication de la lithographie d'art en couleur dans la France Fin de siècle

Natalia P. Lauricella

Author’s note: Many thanks to Rémi Cariel and Pascale Cugy for their organization of the conference L’Estampe, un médium coopératif: graveurs, imprimeurs, éditeurs entre 1890 et 1930 at the Institut national de l’histoire de l’art in Paris in June 2021. Many thanks also to Céline Chicha-Castex in the Département des estampes et de la photographie at the Bibliothèque nationale de France for her research assistance and Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho at the Van Gogh Museum for sharing her expertise and facilitating access to research materials.
In 1893, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec designed a print featuring the interior of a print shop for publisher André Marty’s album *L’Estampe originale*. Jane Avril, a famous cabaret dancer, stands in the foreground examining a sheet of paper, presumably a print just pulled from the press next to her. Behind her, the printer Père Cotelle of the Imprimerie Edward Ancourt is hard at work on the very edition Avril reviews. Solitary, the bespectacled printer focuses on operating the machine, passing paper atop the lithographic stone through the press by turning its star wheel by hand. Ink rollers occupy the ledge beneath the press, saturated with black and green inks that match the black and green hues elsewhere in Lautrec’s print. This color echo suggests that the compositional and material content of the print refers to the process of its own making.

Indeed, it was this lithographer, Père Cotelle, who printed the lithographs for Marty’s album, including one hundred copies of Lautrec’s limited edition print. Lautrec’s depiction associates the album’s title “*l’estampe originale*” or the original print—in this case the limited edition art color lithograph—with the artisanal work of the master printer and the intimate space of his workshop. Though the printer’s practice was borne of industry, it was recast as artisanry for the production of art color lithographs in this period. By tracing the printer’s role in the crafting of these works, this article argues that his collaboration helped to ensure the artistic status of these prints, elevating them as original artworks above commercial chromolithographs, which were made through similar industrial techniques and circulated widely in the period.

Printmaking, and color lithography specifically, attracted painters in 1890s France. Many avant-garde artists, including Impressionist, Symbolist, Neo-Impressionist, and Nabi painters, explored color in their practice and sought additional formats for their experimentation. Artists were drawn to color lithography in particular because it did not require that they learn the printing technique. Artists could draw directly on the...
lithographic stone using oil crayons or use transfer paper and then turn more complex aspects of the process over to a professional printer. Because of its ease of execution, lithography became the medium of choice for painters hoping to further their chromatic investigation. These artists relied on the printer’s skill to materialize their drawings in color lithography, and many in this period chose to work with one in particular: Auguste Clot.

Before opening his own practice in 1895, where he worked closely with artists in the production of art color lithographs, Clot trained and worked for eighteen years at the Imprimerie Lemercier, a large industrial printing firm. Founded in 1828, Lemercier grew dramatically over the course of the nineteenth century, contributing to the rapid and widespread industrialization of lithography. The firm produced a diverse array of prints, including labels, advertising materials, and journal and book illustrations. With the exception of hand-colored and tinted lithographs, Lemercier’s early production consisted primarily of monochrome lithographs. Technical developments and the emergence of steam-powered presses in the 1860s and 1870s rendered possible the production of chromolithographs, which involved the use of multiple stones to print numerous colors. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Lemercier was producing large numbers of chromolithographs, such as trade cards, posters, and reproductions of art.
Lemercier was one of the largest and most successful lithographic firms in Paris; it distinguished itself because of its size, production output, and the number of workers employed. While many firms of the period employed around ten printers, by 1849 Lemercier employed 120 workers.\(^5\) Because of this, labor was necessarily divided in order to expedite and streamline the printing process.\(^6\) Alfred Lemercier’s 1899 manual and treatise on lithography explains that some printers ground stones while others operated the large, steam-powered machines.\(^7\) Printers also worked on various aspects of color printing; they were considered more skilled in the firm and within the trade.
This division between unskilled and skilled work created a hierarchy among laborers that privileged specialized, craft skill. In *The Invention of Craft*, craft historian Glenn Adamson argues that industrialization changed the perception of artisanal work and increased the value of the craftsman’s manual labor. He posits that although artisanal work had long been practiced, the idea of “craft” emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in opposition to “industry.” Trained and skilled workers became part of what Adamson terms the “labor aristocracy.”

Clot was situated within the labor aristocracy at Lemercier, where he held the specialized roles of *chromiste* and later *essayeur*. *Chromistes*, typically gifted draftsmen, performed color separation, which involved inspecting an image intended for reproduction and determining how many colors would be required to print the image. Once all the necessary stones were prepared by the *chromiste*, they would become the responsibility of the *essayeur*, or trial proof printer. The *essayeur* would select the inks, mix the desired colors to best approximate those in the original painting or drawing, and, in some cases, decide upon the order in which the stones would be printed.

Lemercier’s *chromistes* and *essayeurs* performed skilled, artisanal labor, and they were valued for their artistic contributions. Yet their work remained linked to commercial printing because of chromolithography’s association with mass-produced images and because of Lemercier’s status as an industrial workshop. An advertisement published by Lemercier provides a useful example through which to better understand the status of commercial color printers.
This advertisement showcases the chromolithographic printing process behind the production of a trade card for a liquor distillery called Feuillantine. The repetition and layout draw attention to the many stages required for color separation, progression, and registration. To prepare the trade card, printers drew segments of the image by hand on ten different stones, and the fan of color progression proofs reveals the process of layering the stones inked in peach, light yellow, brown, and blue, as well as the ways in which these colors mix on the paper to create new hues. The greater the number of colors, the more difficult the process of color separation and registration would have been for the chromiste and essayeur.

Printed and published by Lemercier, the image advertises a printing service the firm offered and also aligns it with commercial trade cards. The six different versions of the Feuillantine trade cards reproduced in the ad further situate chromolithography explicitly within the context of mass production. Though the chromiste in fact performed highly skilled manual labor in order to print these trade cards, ultimately the handmade quality is overshadowed by the sheer number and variety of trade cards that would be produced—perhaps tens or even hundreds of thousands printed in many different colors.

While the Lemercier advertisement presents the chromiste’s work by way of this clear demonstration of color progression, it offers a point of contrast to the work of the aforementioned Père Cotelle (Fig. 1). The process of color separation and registration developed for commercial chromolithography was nearly identical to that used to produce original art prints, though the latter typically included fewer colors than chromos. Printers and artists of original prints generally tended to use fewer colors in the production of art color lithographs in a deliberate attempt to distinguish art prints from mass-produced commercial chromos.
The Feuillantine ad and Lautrec’s image of the print shop evidence how the visual rhetoric of printing differs in industrial and artisanal workshop settings. The Feuillantine ad clearly explains and visually breaks down the process for the viewer. In Lautrec’s print, Père Cotelle is executing a similar process, but the visual spectacle is reserved for a singular collector, one who is seemingly offered a glimpse behind the curtain to the scene of production. Furthermore, Lautrec’s more avant-garde print—with its use of few colors to illustrate a cropped, compressed, and flattened space—only alludes to, rather than depicts, Père Cotelle’s process of color separation, with references through the ink rollers and the press itself. The process appears to be more subtle, artistic, and subjective, requiring the artistic skills of a printer that cannot be easily articulated or visualized through a diagram in an advertisement. In the Feuillantine ad, the absence of explicit reference to the figure of the printer conveys that in this commercial context, value emerged from the quantity and variety of chromolithographs. In contrast, the value of an art color lithograph is determined, at least in part, by the printer’s singular presence.

Lautrec’s print and the Feuillantine ad were produced within two years of each other, in 1893 and 1895, respectively; the dates are significant because the status of the original color print remained tenuous in the 1890s, a period when commercial and art prints made through similar processes circulated in the public sphere. As avant-garde artists began to experiment in the medium in order to produce luxury fine art prints, they, along with critics and publishers, sought to distinguish original art color lithographs from commercial and reproductive chromolithographs. The involvement of the printer proved difficult for critics to navigate because the printer’s technical skill—particularly in the realm of color—was the result of extensive training in industrial print firms.

Fig. 6. Pierre Bonnard, Cover for La Lithographie en couleurs, 1898, color lithograph. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Sciences et techniques, 8-V-27488
In his 1898 book, *La Lithographie originale en couleurs*, art critic André Mellerio considers the printer’s precarious position, writing that, “the role of the printer, without ever encroaching upon that of the artist, must be to support and help him, overcoming hitches, making the right suggestion at the right time, based on his ability and his deep knowledge of the craft.” According to Mellerio, the printer’s role required a delicate balance: an overly artistic printer skilled in color lithography risks imposing his will on an artist unfamiliar with the medium, but a printer lacking technical skill would not sufficiently facilitate the artist’s creative work. Mellerio’s ambiguity about the printer’s labor belies anxieties about artistic originality and ownership over the creative process. The stakes were especially high given that the printers of art color lithographs like Clot and Cotelle employed industrial materials and techniques. Clot’s ties to industry, however, were reframed when he left Lemercier to set up his own practice around 1895.

In contrast with Lemercier’s manual—a published and mass-produced industry how-to—the inner workings of Clot’s atelier, situated on the Rue du Cherche-Midi in Paris, are captured in an unpublished collection of letters. Letters sent to him by artists, publishers, and colleagues reveal that the setting and nature of Clot’s work changed dramatically in his small workshop. Rather than Lemercier’s many presses of different kinds, Clot’s atelier had only three hand presses. As its founder, Clot was the atelier’s master printer, but because of the small space and perhaps due to financial restrictions, he was also the workshop’s only printer. Because he worked alone most of the time, Clot performed a wider variety of tasks. At Lemercier, he had been responsible only for specific aspects of printing related to color, while other printers took care of the rest of the printing process, such as preparing stones and operating the press. In his atelier, Clot carried out most of these steps, blurring the lines between unskilled and skilled, craft and technical work that divided and structured the production process at large-scale firms.

In his 2008 text, *The Craftsman*, sociologist Richard Sennett offers a theoretical approach to understanding manual labor that encourages a rethinking of the labor hierarchy, particularly in the context of practices such as Clot’s. Sennett contends that craftsmanship and technical skills emerge from the connection between the hand and the head. Manual labor is thus never divorced from intellectual thought; technique is not purely mechanical action but involves the mental labor of a person who developed skills through a trained practice. In Clot’s case, the concentration required, the constant adjustments, and the anticipation of the next complicated step rendered the more technical practices of printing mentally engaging. Sennett calls this the “rhythmic skill of the craftsman.”

Sennett’s study helps us to look beyond period labor hierarchies and value all aspects of Clot’s labor. Even before printing, Clot had to deal with cumbersome lithographic stones, which he had to store, grind and prepare, transport to and from artists’ studios, and proof. He then prepared ink, inked the stones, and worked closely with artists during the trial proof process. Finally, he operated his hand press to produce an entire edition of prints. This final step required tremendous physical stamina and mental work. The printing of an edition of 100 prints in five colors, for instance, required that Clot pass each piece of paper through the press five times. For the entire edition, Clot would need to run the hand press five hundred times, wetting and inking each stone, preparing the stone on the press bed, ensuring color registration through close looking...
and detailed movements, and running the paper through the press. Using industrial techniques and materials similar to those he employed at Lemercier, Clot reconsolidated industrial labor into artisanal labor, performing each role manually and by himself.

Working alone, Clot’s execution of these steps slowed the production process considerably. Lithography’s reputation for being efficient within the industrial setting could not apply to Clot’s practice. In fact, Clot was often behind schedule on projects, and many letters sent to him indicate artists’ displeasure at his tardiness. Nevertheless, artists continued to flock to the atelier to work with him, particularly seeking his skill in color printing. In original art lithographs, color is simultaneously a means for the artist’s creative expression as well as a material—color ink—to be manipulated and controlled by the printer. This was especially true for Symbolist, Neo-Impressionist, and Nabi artists because of their interest in the symbolic, scientific, and psychological potential of color. Before Clot began work on a project with an artist, he had already made important and subjective aesthetic and material choices by purchasing the inks with which to stock his atelier. The options offered by manufacturers were vast and, in turn, printers developed expertise in a wide range of colors, textures, and opacities in order to select inks effectively to purchase and use.

After stocking his atelier, Clot dexterously handled color ink during the printmaking process. When it came time to ink the stones holding the artists’ compositions, Clot prepared colors by mixing various inks together to achieve the desired tones based on artists’ wishes. This process of color mixing also involved adjustments to texture and consistency, achieved by adding varnish. When making an oil painting, artists mixed, adjusted, or painted over oil paint directly on the palette or on the canvas. When they

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Fig. 7. Édouard Vuillard, *Intérieur à la suspension* from *Paysages et intérieurs*, 1899, color lithograph. Département Estampes et photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, RESERVE FOL- EF-499 (2)
worked in lithography, however, they relinquished control of the material and process that yielded color.

The printer worked with artists to choose and then mix individual shades of color with which to ink the stones; but because a print was pulled multiple times over different stones, color production required envisioning and testing how color inks layered on the surface of the page, creating new tones and shades. Artists working in lithography often had trouble imagining the ways that colors would layer or “play” on paper. Clot assisted artists by explaining the potential optical effects of layered colors and advising them on the order in which the colors should be printed. Clot’s guidance indicates his understanding of artists’ desire for aesthetic and conceptual experimentation and his ability to envision what they intended to achieve.

Much of the collaboration between printer and artist took place in the physical space of the printer’s workshop. The collaborative work of color production is thus difficult to trace because it was often discussed in person, without written record. In some cases, however, trial proofs remain that offer insight into this process. Trial proofs are studies that show the color, layering, and registration of a print at any given moment in the printing process. When an artist could not meet with the printer in person, they would typically annotate the proof by hand, indicating the changes they wished to see. Annotated proofs were sometimes accompanied by letters sent to Clot. The artist’s notes were not usually corrections of mistakes made by the printer; rather they were the artist’s responses and reactions to previous decisions made by either one.

Sometimes, artists left color almost entirely to Clot. For example, in a letter to the printer dated October 10, 1899, the Belgian Neo-Impressionist painter Théo Van Rysselberghe wrote,

> It will be, I think, vital for you to take charge of the retouching on the stone of the different plates after they have been transferred... I cannot sufficiently realize in black the strength of the color inks to be sure that the colors are true... I am relying on your great experience and your talent which I have many times admired.

Along with the letter, the artist sent Clot the proof to which he refers, an image of a woman standing on a pier drawn in black on transfer paper. The letter references a print Van Rysselbergh produced in collaboration with Clot called The Jetty, which was included in Germinal, a portfolio of twenty limited edition prints by various avant-garde painters. Because he resided outside of Paris, Van Rysselberghe could not work on the color stones in person and instead entrusted the retouching of the color plates entirely to Clot. Through this exchange, artist and printer experimented with, deliberated, and ultimately agreed upon color. Clot incorporated the artist’s adjustments and repeated the process until the artist signed off with “bon à tirer” or “good for pulling.” This final print would then be used as a model from which to print the complete edition.
Clot’s expertise with color and his handling of color inks enabled artists to achieve the colors they wished to see in print, ensuring the visual “originality” of their lithographs. His involvement was a valuable aspect of these prints because Clot’s manual labor and his atelier setting helped to elevate art prints above the commercial prints produced in an industrial setting. Clot’s practice was dedicated to the printing of art color lithographs, creating an affiliation between the types of prints he crafted within the small workshop and the nature of his solitary labor. This helped establish the high material and artistic quality of these prints when they entered the market as original artworks.

Market value was of particular importance to print publishers. The dealer-publisher Ambroise Vollard—Clot’s most consistent client—was a key player in the commercial network behind many of the art color lithographs that emerged from the atelier on the Rue du Cherche-Midi. Because Clot produced art prints through techniques that were also used commercially, Vollard developed additional means to construct value around these objects. Vollard drew on traditional forms of printmaking and the legacies and revivals of such practices in the nineteenth century, particularly etching. He limited edition sizes, canceled plates, numbered prints, and included the artist’s signature in graphite.
Indeed, despite the printer’s considerable labor and involvement in the conception and production of these art color lithographs, the artist alone signed each print within the final edition. Clot’s name never appeared on the surface of the finished prints not only because his collaboration threatened their value on the art market, which relied on singular authorship, but also because Clot’s ties to industry had to be made absent, or at the very least visually and materially undiscoverable, in order for the prints to become considered works of original modern art.

The final prints obscured a critical agent in their making. Yet, as this article has shown, the printer’s manual labor, artisanal workspace, and collaboration in the conception and production of color were central to establishing modern art color lithographs as distinct from the mass-produced, brightly colored prints of the chromolithographic industry. Recovering and tracing the printer’s hand in the color lithographs he pulled illuminates the intersection of art and industry at the heart of modern artistic developments in fin-de-siècle France.

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APPENDIXES

Le Pouldu 4 aout [18]99
Cher monsieur Clot,
Je vous adresse mes calques dessinés à l’encre à l’essence, avec un croquis de couleurs. Je vous prie de tirer, si c’est possible, tel que — c-a-d avec les teintes de mon lavis — la planche de gris foncé, et celle de vert ; les deux autres peuvent être tirées en à plat.

Envoyez-moi ici les épreuves avec les états séparés ; et dans l’ordre suivant : I bleu clair. Il gris foncé. III rose. IV vert.

Je n’ai pas besoin de vous demander de mettre le plus grand soin à ce travail, où votre collaboration sera très efficace.

À vous,

Maurice Denis

[Sans date]

Cher Monsieur Clot,

Je viens enfin de voir les épreuves l’une à côté de l’autre et en bonne lumière. La première est la meilleure de beaucoup.

Je parle de celle que j’avais laissé chez Monsieur Pellet.

Voici à quoi ça tient.

Le gendarme et la porte sont plus foncés. Il faudra donc les monter de ton. Le carrelage est plus rouge : il faudra pareillement le faire montrer.

Vos encres sont un peu pâles.

Un rien d’énergie dans, la couleur avec ce que je viens de vous indiquer comme modifications ferait un tirage excellent.

Voulez-vous d’après ces indications faire deux ou trois épreuves, et aussitôt faites m’envoyer un mot j’irai chez vous et je vous donnerai sur l’une d’elles le bon à tirer.

Alors la lettre que je vous ai écrite chez M. Pellet tout à l’heure est non avenue sauf pour la retouche près de la main et faire baisser le rouge du dos.

Cordialement,

[Pierre-Georges] G Jeanniot

Tirez quatre épreuves et je n’en prendrai pas d’autre en noir.

[Marz 20 1898]

Dimanche

Mon cher Clot

Nous irons Cross et moi vous consulter demain après midi (lundi) sur nos planches, qui sont terminées, sauf les modifications que vous nous indiquerez.

Cordialement,

P[aul] Signac
Ambleteuse, par Marquise, Pas de Calais

10 Octobre [18]99

Monsieur,

Je vous fais parvenir ci-joints les décalques et la maquette de l’estampe pour l’album que prépare M. Meier Graefe.

Il sera, je pense, indispensable que vous vouliez bien vous charger de retoucher sur la pierre, après report, les différentes planches, car pour certaines teintes plates il m’a été impossible d’arriver à un résultat, le papier de report se boursouflant aussitôt le contact de l’encre lithographique ; et d’autre part je ne me rends pas suffisamment compte de la force des encres de couleur pour être sûr de la justesse des valeurs, en noir.

Veuillez je vous prie, vous en tenir le plus possible aux indications de la maquette ; je me rapporte d’ailleurs à votre grande expérience et à votre talent que j’ai maintes fois pu admirer.

Agréez je vous prie, monsieur, mes bien cordiales salutations.

[Théo] Van Rysselbergh

[...]Van Rysselbergh

[Sans date]

Mon cher Clot

Il m’a été impossible de venir comme j’en avais l’intention faire l’essai avec vous de la pierre de rouge. Et le temps presse ! Voulez-vous le faire sans moi – un bon ton de sanguine que vous saurez varier. Pour la pierre de jaune cherchez moi un ton fait avec de l’ocre et une pointe de noir et réchauffez avec un peu de terre de sienne brûlée. Et sitôt les épreuves tirées ayez l’obligeance de me les adresser. Je tremble ! Vous recevez ce mot demain mardi et il faut que l’épreuve soit au Palais jeudi et il faut auparavant la faire encadrer.

Y arriverons-nous jamais ?

Oui, si vous le voulez bien.

Amicalement à vous

Jean Veber

[...]Van Veber

[Sans date]

Mercredi

Mon cher Clot,

Voulez-vous me tirer 2 ou 3 épreuves un peu bistrées, terre de sienne, noir et un peu de jaune, et tirées aussi légères que possible pour avoir la tête assez fine ?

Après jeudi, sèches on pas sèches, envoyez moi les épreuves le plus vite possible, avec la pierre, de façon que je puisse retoucher 2 ou 3 choses, et avec un grattoir, s’il est possible de gratter légèrement.
Au cas où il serait impossible de gratter ou dangereux, dites le moi par un mot.

Je trouve les épreuves envoyées un peu encrassées dans la tête. Est-ce la faute du papier ? ou du tirage ?

Voulez vous joindre à l'envoi une ou 2 feuilles, plutôt 2, de n'importe quel papier report, prêt que vous aurez sous la main.

Demain cela n'est-ce pas ?

Merci. Votre [Henri] Bataille

NOTES

1. For discussion of Toulouse-Lautrec’s promotion of celebrities in his art, see Mary Weaver Chapin, “Toulouse-Lautrec and the Culture of Celebrity,” in Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre, eds. Richard Thomson, Phillip Dennis Cate, and Mary Weaver Chapin (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 46-63.

2. In La Lithographie originale en couleurs (Paris: L’Estampe et l’affiche, 1898), art critic André Mellerio credits Père Cotelle with the printing of L’Estampe originale. Mellerio also refers directly to this print in his section on Lautrec. Further details about L’Estampe originale can be found in Ruth E. Iskin, The Poster: Art, Advertising, Design, and Collecting, 1860s-1900s (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2014), 134. The album was published from 1893 to 1895 and included 95 prints in nine installments; each print was one of a 100 copies.

3. To learn more about the introduction of color in lithographic printing, see Michael Twyman, A History of Chromolithography: Printed Colour for All (London: British Library, 2013), 25-40, 41-62.

4. For more on the technological advances in chromolithography, see “Chromolithography: Posters, Trade Cards, and the Politics of Ephemera Collecting in Fin-de-Siècle France” in Laura Anne Kalba, Color in the Age of Impressionism: Commerce, Technology, and Art (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2017), 149-181.

5. Jeffrey Rosen, “Lemercier et Compagnie: Photolithography and the Industrialization of Print Production in France, 1837-1859” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1988), 101.

6. Labor in lithographic firms was also divided between men and women. In the nineteenth century, the majority of print firm employees were men. An 1860 study by the Chambre de Commerce indicates that women performed roles such as gilding, cutting, folding, and packing. The report also lists women working as “colorists,” likely referring to the hand coloring of lithographs common prior to the growth of chromolithography in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ibid., 137-138.

7. See Alfred Lemercier, La Lithographie française de 1796 à 1896 et les arts qui s’y rattachent. Manuel pratique s’adressant aux artistes et aux imprimeurs (Paris: Ch. Lorilleux et Cie, 1899), 145-156.

8. See Glenn Adamson, The Invention of Craft (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

9. Ibid., xii.

10. Ibid., xvi.

11. For further explanation of these roles, see Lemercier, La Lithographie française, 70-77, 151-152, 173-177.

12. Ruth Iskin discusses various strategies used in this endeavor in the context of the poster. See R. Iskin, “Les Maîtres des Affiches: Aura and Reproduction,” in The Poster: Art, Advertising, Design, and Collecting, 1860s-1900s, Hanover (New Hampshire): Dartmouth College Press, 2014, 145-170.

13. André Mellerio, Original Color Lithography, trans. Margaret Needham, in The Color Revolution: Color Lithography in France, 1890-1900, eds. Phillip Dennis Cate and Sinclair Hamilton Hitchings (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 90-91. [“Le rôle de l’imprimeur, sans empie...
jamais sur celui de l'artiste, doit le soutenir et l'aider, réparer les accrocs, avoir un imperturbable à propos, fondé sur l'habileté et la science approfondie du métier.” André Mellerio, *La Lithographie originale en couleurs* (Paris: L’Estampe et l’affiche, 1898), 24-25.

14. Copies of these letters are now part of the Fonds Auguste Clot, Département des estampes et de la photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. For more on Clot’s letters and print projects, see Pat Gilmour, “Cher Monsieur Clot...Auguste Clot and his Role as a Colour Lithographer,” in *Lasting Impressions: Lithography as an Art*, ed. Pat Gilmour (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 129-182.

15. Christian Bramsen (master printer, Atelier Clot, Bramsen & Georges, Paris) in discussion with the author, July 5, 2016.

16. References in letters to Clot to “gamins” and an assistant suggest that he may have had the occasional help of a young boy to run errands. Clot also eventually trained his son, André, who apprenticed and worked with Clot and later took over the family business after Clot’s retirement. The majority of the workshop’s activity and production, however, rested in Clot’s hands.

17. Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Sennett’s study is part of a larger discourse on the intellectual qualities of making, a subject of particular significance to critics writing on industrialization in the nineteenth century. For example, John Ruskin suggests that the handmade object contains feeling—originality, thought, and expressivity—that is lacking in objects produced through industrial means. See John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849).

18. Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 9.

19. Ibid., 178.

20. Various printmakers assisted me in my understanding of the role of the printer specifically in regard to color. In particular I thank Christian Bramsen and his colleagues at the Atelier Clot, Bramsen & Georges as well as Jules Maeght and his colleagues at the Imprimerie ARTE for generously inviting me into their print shops in Paris and for answering my numerous questions.

21. Examples of such letters are housed in the Fonds Auguste Clot, Département des estampes et de la photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

22. Théo Van Rysselberge to Clot, 10 Oct. 1899, Fonds Auguste Clot, Département des estampes et de la photographie at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Author’s translation. [“Il sera, je pense, indispensable que vous vouliez bien vous charger de retoucher sur la pierre, après report... je ne me rends pas suffisamment compte de la force des encres de couleur pour être sûr de la justesse des valeurs, en noirs... je me rapporte d’ailleurs à votre grande expérience et à votre talent que j’ai maintes fois pu admirer.”]

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**ABSTRACTS**

In the final years of the nineteenth century, many avant-garde painters in Paris turned to lithography as a new medium through which to further their chromatic exploration. Lithography attracted artists because it did not require their command of the technical aspects of printmaking; they could draw on the stone or transfer paper and then leave the more complex steps to a professional, such as master printer Auguste Clot. Clot became an invaluable collaborator, performing the various labor-intensive steps required to produce color art lithographs, from preparation to final printing. This study examines the printer’s industrial
training, manual labor, and technical expertise in color, the medium’s defining aesthetic and material element. The paper argues that the printer’s artisanal labor and crucial collaboration with artists proved essential for the elevation of original art color lithographs above their commercial counterparts.

Dans les dernières années du XIXᵉ siècle, de nombreux peintres d’avant-garde parisiens se sont tournés vers la lithographie comme nouveau moyen d’approfondir leur exploration chromatique. La lithographie attirait les artistes parce qu’elle ne nécessitait pas qu’ils maîtrisent les aspects techniques de la gravure ; ils pouvaient dessiner sur la pierre ou le papier de transfert, puis laisser les étapes plus complexes à un maître imprimeur comme Auguste Clot. Clot est devenu un collaborateur inestimable, effectuant les laborieuses étapes nécessaires à la production de lithographies d’art en couleur, de la préparation à l’impression finale. Cette étude examine la formation industrielle, le travail manuel et l’expertise technique de l’imprimeur en matière de couleur, élément esthétique et matériel déterminant du médium. L’article postule que le travail artisanal de l’imprimeur et sa collaboration cruciale avec les artistes se sont avérés essentiels pour élever les lithographies d’art originales en couleur au-dessus de leurs équivalents commerciaux.

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**Mots-clés:** Imprimeur, lithographie, art, couleur, travail, collaboration

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AUTHOR

**NATALIA P. LAURICELLA**

Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, Department of Art & Art History, Stanford University