

Meet the Artist: Maria Arango

(702) 798-8430 maria@mariarango.com <http://www.1000woodcuts.com>

Hello visitors, and thank you for taking the time to look at my art. Would you be so kind as to please sign the guest book before you leave.



I was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1959. A one-and-a-half year old child cannot remember what it was like to have our homes and businesses taken over by the regime of Fidel Castro. In any case, we took a long ship-ride to Spain right about when Cuba turned communist. I was raised in Barcelona, Spain until 1974. In a sense, I still think of Spain as home, a home that will be undoubtedly changed if and when I return to visit. There again, hard for me to remember the turmoil of Franco's impending death and the threat of political unrest. Time for another long trip! This time my family and I moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, where we were reunited with my father's family. I have loved art all my life and earned a few stripes at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, although I basically learned the art of the woodcut on my own. As of September 30th, 1999 I am a full-time artist.

BIOGRAPHY

Maria Arango earned BS and MS degrees in Psychology and Exercise Physiology from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas before taking a variety of fine and graphic art classes. Printmaking changed her life forever and she spent a few years of honing her skills and amassing a body of work, primarily in woodcut prints.

Maria has been exhibited in several galleries in the Las Vegas area as well as the Las Vegas Art Museum, and has quickly expanded to regional, national and international shows. Maria's accomplishments include Best of Show Award in the Art Fest of Henderson and purchase awards including works in the Springfield Museum of Art. Most recently works have been accepted in the prestigious Brand Gallery and Art Center in California in their annual juried works on paper exhibition, the Parkside National Small Print Exhibition and Hunterdon Museum of Art. She is represented by various galleries through the Southwest. Art Festivals throughout the Southwest continue to be Maria's favorite venue for meeting her fast growing audience of collectors.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I am dedicated to making woodcut and wood engraving prints. In one of the latest series of woodcut prints I try to let the wood, ink, and paper speak their own voice and add their own imprint to the resulting work to emphasize the process. The process of printmaking fascinates me, I want to show the scars of the process: the embossed paper, chunky inks, chisel marks, block dents. I know I'm supposed to have lofty art goals and elaborate smartly on intent and purpose of my art but not having a strong academic background, I'm afraid I'd just make a fool of myself.

As far as imagery, figurative work interests me as much as the desert and all its fruitful offerings, the two being principal subjects in my current work. In the Woodpeople series, born out of observation of the wood grain and an appreciation for the human figure, my intent is to interpolate wood fiber and muscle, wood grain and body contours, wood swirls and body energies. I am interested in the surprising likeness of the two natures, wood and human, as well as in exploring the metaphor of the importance of wood and nature in human existence, especially important to the woodcut printmaking artist working on paper. The human figure recurs again and again, being a principal element in most of my work. Rather than methodically working on certain imagery, it is the image that appears in my head inspired by an overheard word or a passing thought. I print the ones that stick.

I am currently working with a papermaker in designing plant-papers for some of my prints in an effort to emphasize the substrate without which my work would not be possible. I am also working on leading a collaborative puzzle project with 44 other printmakers from around the world. In a very recent exciting collaboration, I am now pulling relief prints off cut stone designs by an artist who depicts petroglyphs and pictographs throughout the Southwest. My ultimate hope is to always reward the viewer and to capture the attention, if only for a moment, of the artist that lies within all.

Learn much more about Maria Arango Original Woodcuts on the web!

View all the art at
WWW.1000WOODCUTS.COM

Upcoming Exhibits
www.1000woodcuts.com/exhibits/exhibit.html

Who is Maria Arango?
www.1000woodcuts.com/artist.htm

Why 1,000 Woodcuts?
www.1000woodcuts.com/1000woodcuts/1000.html

The Art of the Woodcut

maria@mariarango.com
<http://www.1000woodcuts.com>

Basics about woodcuts

Woodcuts and other relief methods are fairly simple in concept. First a wood plank is cut so that all parts of the design that are not to print are cut away. Then the design, now in relief, is inked with pigment. Finally a sheet of paper is laid upon the inked design, pressure is applied and a transfer of the design is obtained on the surface of the paper.

Some thoughts about woodcut printmaking:

The simple process outline above becomes magical for me every time I start a new work. More traditional approaches require that the ink be perfectly and evenly laid, that the wood grain be eliminated through careful planing or sanding, that the paper be the exact right type... To me, the wood must have a voice in the final print, the ink must leave its visible marks, the muscle of the printing tool must also leave a deep emboss, the paper, above all the paper, must show its beauty through the design. I begin by sketching right on the beautiful wood block but the design comes alive when I begin cutting with chisels and knives. The entire process has to be visible-the process must show.



How woodcuts are made

Cutting the block

The magic begins with cutting. Designs take on their own personality once the wood and the knife meet. Chisel marks become movement, lines come to life, flat areas are full of wood-life and energy. I like the marks the chisels make, often I leave them shallow enough so that the ink will caress them and they will print. The marks give the print life and movement and print less precisely than the perfectly cut lines so that a wider variety of marks are printed. I let the chisels make their characteristics marks and modify my designs as they wish. The resulting prints tend to be more "woodcutty" this way.

Printing

One of the magic things about printmaking is that the process modifies the final result. I think accepting the process is part of printmaking, knowing that the block and the ink will have their own say about what the final print looks like.

Once the paper is soft and ever so slightly damp, printing begins. Whatever ink I am using is rolled out on a marble slab to a very thin and even sheet. Printing is a matter of rolling the ink on the block until it is loaded with ink. Then the paper is placed on the block, making sure the margins and non-printing areas are clean.

Obtaining a good print is hard work and takes some muscle. A print is made by rubbing the back of the paper with a printing tool. This can be a traditional Japanese Baren or rice spoon, or anything that will push the paper against the ink. I make sure as I go along that I am not moving the paper from the registration marks and that I am getting all the areas printed evenly. A sheet of protective paper on the back of thinner paper assures that I do not tear it; thicker paper can stand the punishment and you can see the design from the back in the form of a burnished mark.

Editions, or how many prints are made from one block, vary from 10 to 200 for artist pulled prints, whether by hand or press. Hand pulled editions are usually less than 100. In order to truly limit the edition, the wood block is defaced and in some cases, destroyed.

All Maria Arango prints are originals, designed, cut and printed by the artist.