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INSTRUCTOR ANN OVER, at right, lifts the first monotype off the matrix with Mary Conway at the helm doing the turning.



MARY CONWAY HOLDS UP the matrix that will produce the first monotype on the press.

SRAL ARTISTS MASTERING NEW PRESS

By Ellen Sussman

Special to the Green Valley News

As the art exhibit season in Green Valley winds down, Santa Rita Art League members are gearing up for lessons on how to use the new monotype press delivered to the studio in early April.

Printmaker Ann Over had been inviting fellow SRAL artists to her home for three years, where they enjoyed using her press.

"They loved it! I thought they could become stronger if we, the Santa Rita Art League, had a press. The board was unanimous in voting for it," she said.

The Blick 906 Etching Press is light, at only 48 pounds, and small enough that it can be picked up and moved, yet is

durable enough to produce a variety of monotypes — etchings, drypoints, engravings, embossings, linoleum block prints and paper-plate lithographs.

A monotype is a one-of-a-kind, hand-pulled print. Although the monotype is a print, it is considered an original and not a reproduction. By creating the proper pressure and pressing the plate and paper together with the inks or paints sandwiched between, a texture is created that could not be duplicated by painting directly on paper.

Over said the plate is called the matrix; it's the mother of the print and the artist creates art on the matrix.

After the layers go through the press, the art is gently peeled off the plate. The result is a surprise due to the flattening, squeezing and movement of the process.

The artist never knows what the final result will be until the monotype is peeled off the plate.

Monotypes are unique because only one, sometimes two, impressions may be pulled before the ink or paint is used up. A second impression is usually quite different from the first because most of the pigment was lifted in the first pass. A second impression is often referred to as a "ghost" print.

Over said the first meeting was solely about paper. At a second meeting on April 16, a group of 12 artists attended to learn different elements needed to make a monotype print, how to adjust the tension on the press and the proper sequence of adding the necessary layers — the matrix, newsprint, catcher, cushion and pusher all resting on the bed of the press. They al-

so learned the importance of relieving the tension on the press once the print was complete.

Artists planning to use the press will need to pass a verbal test before being permitted to use it. They will need to name and explain the parts of the press, the sequence of preparing the workspace and creating a monotype, knowledge of appropriate paints and inks, and how to properly clean the press when finished.

Over explained the advantage of printing one copy at a time on a monotype press versus drawing or painting an image. "In printmaking, other than silkscreen, when you put something through pressure — whether through a lithograph or etching press — you're pushing the ink into a receptive paper."

She credited Art League member Joyce Cox for taking it

upon herself to make the purchase of the press happen, and said member Jan Evans, who is well aware of press techniques, will be a big help.

The studio will be an environmentally friendly "green" studio, as the press uses only water-based paints.

"With our small press we're going to make some very interesting things. We'll make linoleum blocks like Picasso did. They may not be as good, but we'll try it," Over said.

"It's a pioneering sort of thing for us. That's why I love printmaking. It's so exciting. I think we're smart enough to figure it out. If we need, we'll bring in some help."

Contact Green Valley freelance reporter **Ellen Sussman** at ellen2414@cox.net.



MARY CONWAY SHOWS the results of the "ghost print," or second print, from the matrix.



ARTISTS TAKE TURNS applying paint to a matrix for a first run-through monotype on the press.



MARY CONWAY HOLDS the first monotype to come off the press.