Investigating the surface materials found on a collection of 14 Jose Posada printing blocks in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art (ACMAA) collection.

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This project is one of the initial studies to be undertaken as a collaboration between the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History at the University of Texas at Dallas, the Dallas Museum of Art and the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at UT Dallas.

Project Summary:

The aim of this project is use a range of complimentary analytical techniques including sophisticated ion and electron beam based surface analysis tools such as electron microscopy (EDX), X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy and secondary ion mass spectrometry to elucidate the surface chemistry and microstructure of printing blocks used by Jose Posada to create Mexican prints.

Jose Posada (1852-1913) was a key figure in the development of modern Mexican printmaking; his contribution to cultural imagery is unrivalled. He produced an estimated 15,000 different ephemeral prints that documented every facet of Mexican life. His images, especially his calaveras (skeletons) portrayed in everyday tasks, have become icons typically associated with images for the Mexican celebration Day of the Dead. The Amon Carter Museum has one of the largest and best collections of Posada’s work, with more than 400 prints and 14 printing plates directly attributed to Posada. Research has been conducted on the synthetic dyes used to color Posada’s papers but his printing blocks have been left largely unstudied.

The printing blocks in the Carter’s collection consist of engraved wood, etched metals, including what appears to be zinc and copper, as well as type-metal. Posada chose materials that would hold up to hundreds and hundreds of printings as his readership was enormous. Elemental analysis of the block surface’s would help indicate Posada’s method of working, the printing inks used, Posada’s various printing techniques and will continue to build on the work that has already been carried out on his prints.

Resources:


Further information:

For further information and/or to initiate an informal discussion please contact:

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