

# DuPont



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DU PONT

# ARTISTS IN AFRICA

ARTIST-PRINTMAKER DENNIS CURRY DETAILS AFRICAN WILDLIFE USING "MYLAR" FILM AND DUPONT HOWSON PRINTING PLATES



*"I am doing what I love and celebrating what I see on this planet."*

So says Dennis Curry – artist, conservationist and master printmaker – whose first African safari in 1982 opened his eyes to the beauty, the awe and the threatened future of some of earth's most remarkable creatures and habitats.

In a recent six-week expedition, Curry was joined by fellow artists Al Agnew, Brian Jarvi, Rick Kelley, Gary Moss and Daniel Smith, and by Christopher Law, director of The Foundation Fine Arts Ltd., in Hansville, Washington. Their work is captured in the Foundation's limited edition set of original lithographs, entitled "The Artists' Africa Portfolio."

The portfolio demonstrates a new and exacting method of fine art origination: the drawing of a richly detailed wildlife image one layer at a time. The artist creates a separate sheet for each color, each shade of tan in the parched African grass, each glint of orange in the eye of the leopard.

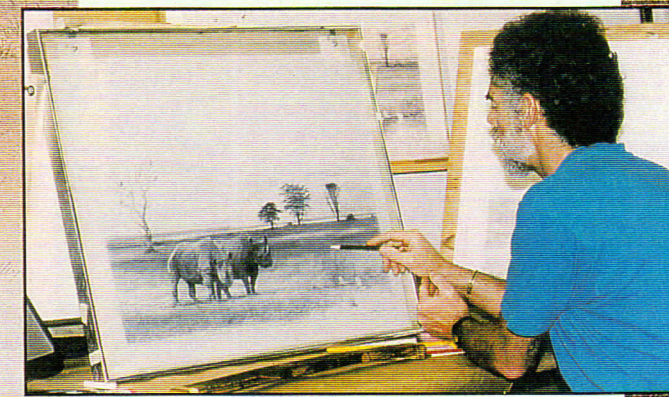
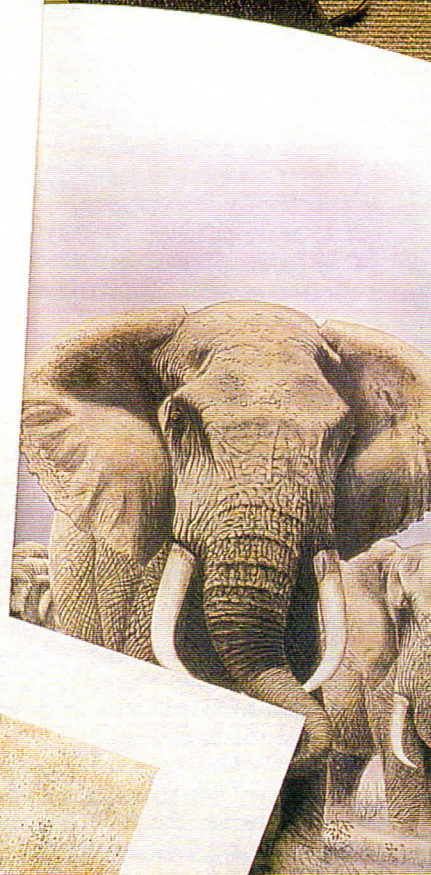
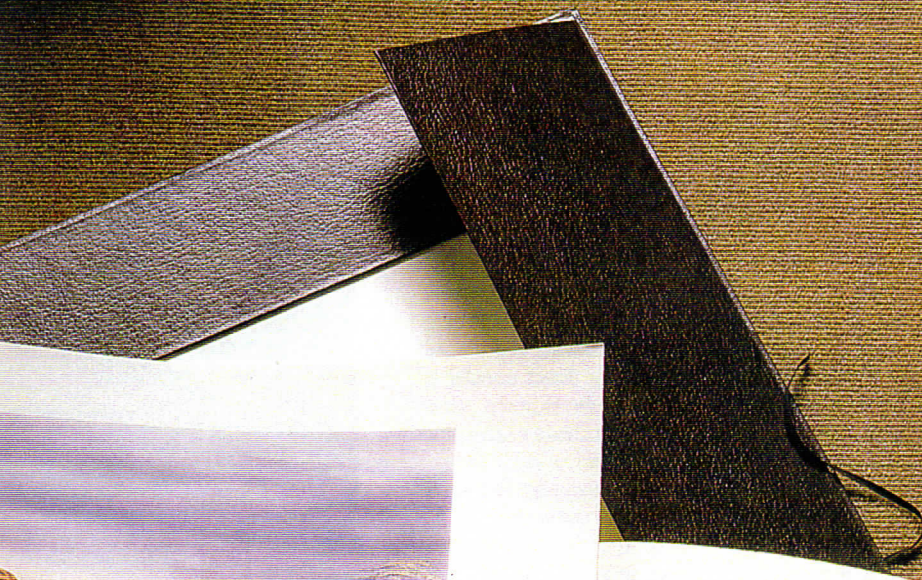
A completed wildlife study may consist of as many as 30 separate layers. Each is detailed in graphite on its own sheet of precision-coated "Mylar" polyester film, each needing to line up perfectly with the next. Later, the films will be used to expose DuPont Howson printing plates: direct reproductions of the artist's original pencil strokes.

That's as many as 30 plates, corresponding to 30 inks and 30 painstaking passes through the single-color, sheet-fed offset press at Curry's Blueberry Press in Cambria, California. But oh, the richness of detail and colors that result! Ink becomes nature's paints, as the artist watches the press put his original strokes onto the emerging lithograph.

Curry admits he was attracted to the process after being disappointed with his results using oil paints. His graphic arts training and fine printing skills made the "Mylar" film and Howson printing plates an easier fine art medium to explore. But he warns that it takes time to master.

"Even the original lithographers, who painstakingly engraved mirror images of their creations in stone, could stop for an occasional check on a work in progress," says Curry. "All they had to do was run a paper proof directly on the stone."

In a Curry wildlife study, by contrast, the colors must be carried in his head, untested until plates have been mounted and inks mix for the first time

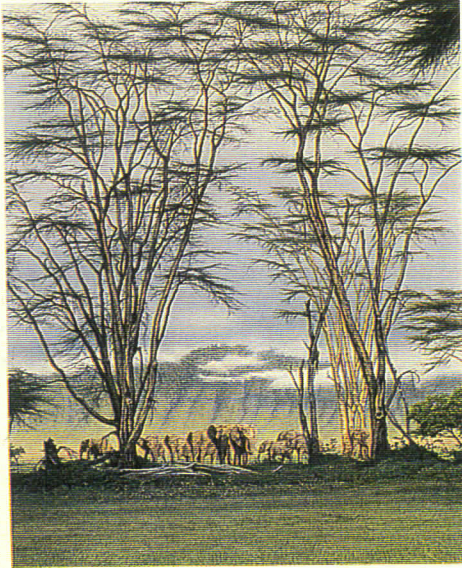


Dennis Curry is one of six wildlife artists included in "The Artists' Africa Portfolio."

## OTHER DENNIS CURRY PRINTS:



"Night Watch"



"Cathedral of the Elephants"



"Companions of Ngorongoro"

on his press. The process differs from that of conventional lithographers, who see a color original, then filter it photographically into just four basic printing colors – magenta (red), cyan (blue), yellow and black. The printing that results (like that in this magazine) can be good, but it's not considered original art.

### **Hands-On, Original Prints**

"Make no mistake," says Christopher Law, publisher of Curry's work, "conventional prints can be high-quality pieces, turned out by real craftsmen. But it's still mass production. Curry's process – direct transfer of pencil strokes from the 'Mylar' onto the Howson plates, followed by hands-on ink mixing to create exact colors – means every lithograph is an original work of art."

Because the process avoids photographic filters and the limitations of conventional four-color printing, the resulting lithographs are richer in color saturation and better reflect the artist's original strokes.

"It's fine art in the truest sense," affirms Law. "An increasing number of wildlife artists are finding it to be the best medium for their work."

The Artists' Africa Portfolio contains six works – "Giraffes of Manyara" by Curry, "Cheetah Domain" by Agnew, "African Requiem" by Jarvi, "The Protector" by Kelley, "Serengeti Spring" by Moss, and "Cape Thunder" by Smith. Each artist used coated "Mylar" because of the film's strength, dimensional stability and receptivity to graphite.

"There's a variety of films available for lithography," Curry acknowledges, "but we need a drawing surface that will not shrink or grow in a hot or damp environment. When I overlay my drawings a week or month from now, there can't be any gaps or unwanted overlap. That's especially important when I'm ready to start exposing plates, which is why I rely on 'Mylar'."

Curry describes his art as "landscapes with wildlife." For a typical African scene such as "Giraffes of Manyara," he may use four or more sheets of "Mylar" for background trees and foliage and two or more for foreground turf and grasses. The remaining sheets get devoted to the giraffes – three for drawing basic coloration, plus additional sheets for drawing the colors that make up the facial details.

Like many other lithographers, Curry favors Howson "Super Amazon" fine-grained plates with an anodized aluminum substrate. The plates are exposed by ultraviolet light projected through the translucent "Mylar" film drawing. Where penciled graphite shields the plate from exposure, a subsequent aqueous developer bath leaves a smooth, hard coating – a mirror image of the artist's work. On-press, the image on the plate accepts ink and transfers it to a mat for imposition on paper.

"We actually designed 'Super Amazon' plates to offer crisp impressions in halftone printing runs of 500,000 or more copies," notes Mike Jeff, DuPont Imaging technical manager. "The qualities that make the coating so tough and durable – resistance to solvent attack by ink, as well as to abrasion, chipping and flaking – are the very attributes lithographers need in order to produce high fidelity reproductions."

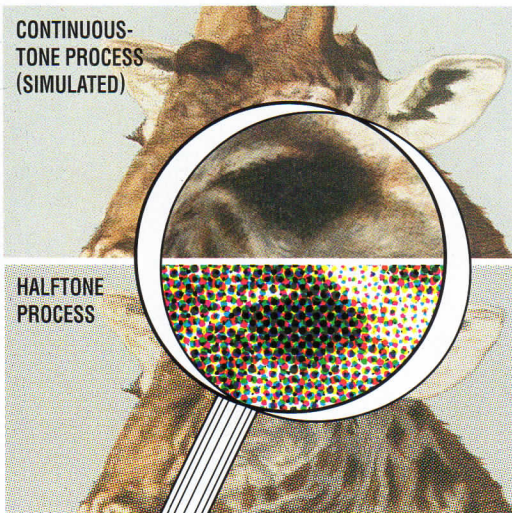
Completing a single print edition is a relatively slow process, according to Curry: "As much as two days to mount and print each of the plates involved; but that gives us more control. Modern four-color presses crank out hundreds of copies just while synchroniza-

Collectors praise printmaker Dennis Curry's wildlife portraiture as "hands-on" art. To Curry, it's an expression of love for the animals and scenes he has experienced on safari.



CONTINUOUS-TONE PROCESS (SIMULATED)

HALFTONE PROCESS



With Howson plates and continuous-tone printing, Curry avoids the dot patterns of conventional (halftone) printing.

tion and ink-flow adjustments are being made. On my tiny press, I deal with only two or three proofs each time I heighten or lessen color to get an exact tone or shade. This is an important consideration when you're using such expensive, premium quality art paper.

"That's why Christopher Law calls this 'hands-on' art," Curry points out. "A true lithograph artist doesn't just sign each copy of his creation. He fusses over every detail and approves every print.

"And that," Curry concludes, "is why every one of my prints is truly an artist's original!"

Art collectors interested in "The Artists' Africa Portfolio" can call The Foundation Fine Arts at 206-638-1240. For more information on "Mylar" film or Howson plates for fine printing, write: LITHOGRAPHY, *DuPont Magazine*, Wilmington, DE 19898. ■



Each color in a Curry wildlife starts in pencil — drawn in reverse — on coated "Mylar" film. He exposes Howson plates directly from the films, then mixes his inks for rich, detailed color printing.

#### FILM COATING IS IMPORTANT

To accept the ink, crayon or pencil graphite used in film lithography — or designing and drafting — "Mylar" polyester film must be coated. Two types of frosted or matte-finished "Mylar" film favored by artists are sold under the "Stabiltrace" trademark of Precision Coatings Inc., Walled Lake, Michigan, and the "Herculene" trademark of Azon Corporation, Johnson City, New York.

"Our coatings accept just about any impression, including 'fast' inks used on computerized designs," affirms Norman Sweet, Precision's director of research and new market development. "All of them combine dimensional stability with the translucency needed for sharp reproduction."

The added durability of the coating on "Stabiltrace" and "Herculene" films used for manual drawing permits an artist to erase and correct work in progress.