

Front Cover

The cover is printed on pale peach paper. It contains the title “*Relief Printing: Carving Processes* by Míša Štorková.” Smaller text at the bottom of the page reads “from the series *Pressing Forward: Making Fine Arts Printmaking Accessible for All.*”

On this cover is a soft linoleum print of a series of relief printmaking carving tools laid out. The image is continuous from the back cover to the front; on the front cover are shown a chainmail anti-cut glove, palm-handled carving gouge, and replacement carving tips. Wrapping around from the back cover is an electrical cord and base of another carving tool. The background of this image has rounded horizontal chatter.

Text-to-Speech and Audio Disclaimer:

The citation style used in text-only and audio format is different than visual format. For visual zines, Chicago style citations are used, with superscript roman numerals that correspond to endnotes in the ‘References’ section at the end. For text-only zines designed for text-to-speech readers, citations will be formatted as such: (endnote #: cited to [name]). Corresponding Chicago-style endnotes can also be found in the ‘References’ section at the end. This difference allows for smoother navigation and clarity.

These zines are created in a collage aesthetic that uses paper cutouts, imperfect drawings, expressive scribbles, and stickers to provide visual interest. Individual pages include focused image descriptions of diagrams and photographs, without descriptions of this collage aesthetic.

Context/Acknowledgements

This zine is part of *Pressing Forward: Making Fine Arts Printmaking Accessible to All*, a series focused on accommodating Fine Arts Printmaking (namely, silkscreen and relief) to physically Disabled artists.

This series of zines addresses accessibility as it relates to my lived experiences, and the experiences of the Disabled printmakers with whom I consulted. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list of accommodations which could be used while printmaking. Accommodations focus on working at wheelchair height, with reduced mobility, strength, and stamina. Disability is as diverse as there are Disabled people, and I welcome others to expand and extend upon my research in areas that I haven't covered.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this study (REB25-1061).

These zines were conceptualized and realized on Treaty 7 territory, northwest of where the Bow and Elbow rivers meet at a site traditionally known as Moh'kins'tsis to the Blackfoot, Wîchîspa to the Stoney Nakoda, and Guts'ists'i to the Tsuut'ina, and on which land I am an uninvited guest. The Métis Nation of Alberta (Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6) also call this area home.

Thank you to the 5 incredible Disabled printmakers who shared their practices with me; in no particular order: Zoe Z. Steinberg, Heather Huston, Chelsea Clarke, Javier Flores, and Chelsey Campbell. I could not have done this project without their willingness to share their lived experiences and technical knowledge with me.

While barriers persist within institutional walls, I am grateful for the support from the University of Calgary's Program for Undergraduate Research Experience (PURE), which funded this project. Additionally, thank you to Dr. Ada Jaarsma for providing materials funding, and the Disability Studies scholars who consulted with me on this project; Dr. Zack Marshall and Noah Ulicki.

Thank you Aidan Dupuis, for acting as my hand model, and Dylan Martin for being a wonderful studio assistant.

Thank you to Alex Linfield, for advocating to put Míša ramps around the art building where needed, and for building me a wheelchair-height silkscreen printing table.

And finally, thank you to my long-time research supervisor, Heather Leier, who has taught me to raise my standards for allyship.

Pages 1-2: Intro

In my zine about Relief Carving Tools, I go through accessibility pros and cons of the most common tools out there, as well as how to modify tools. Here, I will focus on the actual process of carving a block, and substrate options.

Go by what hurts your hands least, you know your body best.

If you have hand strength/dexterity issues, soft lino or insulation foam will likely be a much better option than woodcut.

You can warm up stiff lino with an iron, hot plate, or oven to make it more pliable. Some artists, such as myself, find it too stiff regardless.

A linear scale shows various relief substrates ranked from firmest on the left to softest on the right. From firmest; woodcut; then hard lino, soft lino, and finally insulation foam at the softest side.

Page 3: Woodcut

PROS:

- Financially flexible.
- You can achieve sharp, crisp lines and mark-making and fine detail work.
- Prints well by hand or through a press.
- Laser cutter (for photographic-based work).

CONS:

- Difficult to carve with hand strength/dexterity issues.
- Makes Miša's hands swell up.

Page 4: Hard Lino

PROS:

- Financially accessible.
- Prints well by hand or through a press.
- Can be softened by heating on a hot plate, which can make it pliable enough for some (endnote 1: cited to Heather Huston and Chelsea Clarke).
- Laser cutter (for photographic-based work).

CONS:

- Difficult to carve with hand strength/dexterity issues.

Pages 5-6: Soft Lino

PROS:

- Soft to carve.
- Financially quite affordable.

CONS:

- Difficult to get the same level of detail as a harder material.
- Squish or jump when printing through a press. This can be mitigated by using very light pressure and a stiff tympan over your block (ie: matboard).
- There tends to be less respect for soft blocks in the world of print (endnote 2: cited to Zoe Z. Steinberg).

I stand by the belief that accommodation doesn't lead to 'worse technique' or 'less polished' methods, it's simply allowing you to participate (endnote 3: cited to Heather Huston). The goal is not to do the same exact process, but rather to create things, innovate, and challenge the hierarchies of print (endnote 4: cited to Chelsea Clarke). If someone tries to downplay the quality of your work simply for the mediums you find more accessible, consider carrying around a pair of earplugs, just in case *kissy emojis to reference a cheeky tone*.

Personally, I buy the pink blocks that my local art store stocks (we boycott Amazon in this house).

Pages 7-8: Insulation Foam

PROS:

- Softest block.
- Very affordable.
- Prints well through a printing press.

CONS:

- Working small can be a challenge.
- Harder to get very crisp, clean lines through compression like you would if you carved out a block.
- Hand printing can be hard depending on scale.

For more specifics, see my other zine! Here is a sketch of the cover of one of my other zines in this series, titled *Relief Printing: Insulation Foam*. The cover contains a block of foam, pencil, and face mask wrapping around from the back cover.

Pages 9-10: Scale and Carving Process

When carving, working big can allow for more detail, as a small block means that it's hard to hold and carve safely (endnote 5: cited to Zoe Z. Steinberg). Alternately, if fatigue is your main concern, going small can save energy, especially when using a stiff block and/or hand printing (endnote 6: cited to Heather Huston and Chelsea Clarke).

Anti-cut gloves are a good option for those of us with poor muscle control, to avoid accidentally carving your hand. A photograph of two hands wearing anti-cut gloves and holding a utility knife.

Use a bench hook so that you can use both hands to stabilize and guide the tool, getting a cleaner image and keeping your hands safe from cuts (endnote 7: cited to Heather Huston and Javier Flores). A photograph of a wooden bench hook slotted over a table edge. A soft linoleum block is pressed up against its upper ledge. I would add a sentence after table edge. A bench hook is a wood panel with a cleat that holds your matrix in place on a table.

If a bench hook is too bulky, you can buy a rubber or silicone anti-slip mat instead (this one is my preference) (endnote 8: cited to Zoe Z. Steinberg and Javier Flores). A photograph of a soft linoleum block and carving gouge placed on a silicone anti-slip mat.

Pages 11-12: Carving Process Continued

Keep ergonomics in mind! The angle of your carving tool is important, as making shallow incisions rather than gouging deep into the block reduces strain. A photograph of hands holding a gouge, carving shallowly into a soft linoleum block. The gouge is at approximately a 15° angle to the block.

Use several fingers or your entire palm to guide the tool rather than just one finger to add pressure (endnote 9: cited to Heather Huston and Javier Flores). You can alternate holding the tools in different positions in your hand(s). A photograph of a right hand carving with a gouge tool, while the pointer and middle fingers of the left hand support the angle of the blade as it carves into the block.

Ultimately, one of my most significant changes is embracing looser and scrappier mark-making. Crip aesthetics can add a conceptual layer to your work and help you develop a visual style (endnote 10: cited to Heather Huston). I say it's just a shortcut to gaining textured, gestural abstraction! It's something even abled artists aspire to. A poorly-photoshopped image contains a grainy photo of a hamster showing a peace sign. The heading reads "All Curators Hate Them!", while smaller text underneath reads "Local Artist exposes SHOCKING art secret! Learn this one trick to gaining gestural, textured abstraction."

Pages 13-14: Rotary Power Tool

A rotary power tool is typically used for precision carving wood, plastic, stone, etc. It works by rotating a rough tip and essentially sanding away areas of your block. You could experiment with woodblock, linoleum, stone, plastic...the possibilities are endless! On the left-hand side of the

page is a cutout photo of a Dremel brand power tool. On the right-hand side of the page is a photograph of Miša's hands (white, androgynous hands with tattoos along the knuckles) carving an insulation foam block with the same power tool shown earlier (Dremel 3000).

Make sure to use appropriate breathing protection – silicosis is no joke!

This may not be the right solution for you if vibrating tools trigger flareups (endnote 11: cited to Alex Linfield).

Pages 15-16: Can't use traditional handheld carving tools? Try these methods!

Natural processes like erosion or accidental human-made marks could be great methods of mark-making as they gradually carve away at a block. Perhaps you could install a block in a location that will get a lot of traffic, and let the gradual erosion create images and textures.

Some artists are working to develop processes using a laser cutter on woodblock for students who are unable to carve by hand (endnote 12: cited to Chelsea Clarke and Heather Leier). You may be able to get access through a local library, art school, or artist run centre.

Pages 17-18: Alternate Relief Processes

Not pushing your body to do a process that hurts you can itself be an accommodation (endnote 13: cited to Chelsea Clarke). Here are some ideas on how you could use relief printing in other ways:

- Switching to using insulation foam as a block, which requires only minimal dexterity to make marks with a variety of tools, and prints well through a press.
- Stippling and hatching/cross-hatching are techniques typically used in drawing. With a stamp containing dot or line structures, you can create shading using these techniques. The only movement needed for this is the ability to hold a stamp (bulked up or modified as needed) and moving it between a stamp pad and paper. On the right-side of the page are two test prints with this method, one using a line structure and the other using a dot structure. Both have two overlapping prints of the same texture at different angles, overlapping to create moiré patterns. Areas where there is only one print give the allusion of lighter value, while overlapped areas appear darker. @repeater.stamps on Instagram sells a halftone comic shading kit perfect for this technique!

REFERENCES

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3. Míša Štorková and Heather Huston, personal interview, July 30, 2025.
4. Míša Štorková and Chelsea Clarke, personal interview, August 06, 2025.
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11. Míša Štorková and Alex Linfield, personal interview, July 28, 2025.
12. Míša Štorková and Chelsea Clarke, personal interview, August 06, 2025. Míša Štorková and Heather Leier, personal interview, July 28, 2025.
13. Míša Štorková and Chelsea Clarke, personal interview, August 06, 2025.

Artist Bio

A black-and-white headshot of the artist is shown here. They are a white, androgynous person with a short mullet and tattoos, wearing a dark cut-off t-shirt, with their arms crossed in front of their chest. Along the side of this photograph, text reads “photo by April Neuhaus.”

Míša Štorková (they/he/on/ona) is an emerging artist, craftsperson, and arts educator originally from Czechia and currently based on Treaty 7 land in so-called Canada. Míša’s primary mediums are printmaking and analog photography, though anything employing a hands-on mixed media approach lies within their interest. Their art practice focuses primarily on the Disabled experience, matrilineal relationships, and generational trauma – regarding biological and/or found family, and they use humour to find meaning within the absurdity of marginalization. Míša strives to make works which question what we view as Fine Art, and to give voice to those who have been ‘Othered’. Their work has been exhibited across Canada and published internationally.

BACK COVER

This cover is printed on pale peach paper.

It depicts a soft linoleum print of a series of relief printmaking carving tools laid out, in black on a pale peach cover. The image is continuous from the back cover to the front; on the back cover are shown a rotary power carving tool, replacement rotary bits, and box cutters. Wrapping around to the front cover is an electrical cord, and a handheld carving tool. The background of this image has rounded horizontal chatter.

Text underneath this image reads "Copyright Míša Štorková 2026."