

The Letterpress Co.

PRINTERS AND PURVEYORS OF LUXURY BESPOKE STATIONERY

a brief guide on how to appreciate luxury letterpress stationery

What is luxury letterpress stationery? And how would you recognise it if you saw it?

Above all, beautifully-crafted letterpress printed stationery should make you want to touch it.

Pick it up.

Feel the paper.

Does it have a plush, sensual texture? Is it 100% cotton?

Pure cotton paper provides an unsurpassed canvas for the imprint created by the letterpress. Much like a fluffy, down duvet, fine cotton papers have a quality called loft which is ideal for creating the “sculptural” look associated with letterpress printing. Given the importance of choosing superior quality fine paper for letterpress printing, this aspect of the letterpress printed article speaks about *quality*.

Look at surface of the paper.

Can you see the indentation where the image was transferred to the paper by force of the printing plate?

This is called the impression. Like sculpture, the printed image appears to have been “carved” into the paper. This is a unique feature of letterpress printing – which today is still a handcrafted method – and cannot be reproduced by computerised printing techniques or any other means. This impression connects the modern printed artefact to hundreds of years of printing history back to the origins of moveable type in 13th century Asia and 15th century Europe. As a differentiator from mass-produced products, this aspect of the letterpress printed article speaks about *provenance* and the concept of luxury that is associated with things that are still handmade today.

Notice the inked image.

Is it crisp? When done expertly, the letterpress printed image should create a well in the paper; the ink will rest on the floor of the well supported by “shoulders” of paper. This aspect of the printed article speaks about the high standard of *artisanal skill* required to produce luxury letterpress stationery.

Consider the elements of the design.

Design which is sensitive to letterpress printing exploits the fact that the paper itself is a “colour” and that instead of working in the conventional one dimension of printing (flat surface), you now have a three dimensional plane populated by the grooves and ridges and rivulets of ink which all together make up your printed image. This aspect of the printed article speaks about taste and an *aesthetic* which values subtlety and artful restraint.

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