260909 A Printmaking Museum for Seattle's Uptown Neighborhood

Parable: Women in a cave

Two women walked into a cave. Sounds like a joke, but it could have happened. Two women in a cave 40 thousand years ago were entertaining a gathering. One was painting, and the other watched. It was quite a show, magical to see the artist giving form to one of the animals everyone knew and feared - an *aurochs* - ancestor of cows; and they sometimes killed for meat.

The painter used a yukky mixture of blood, berries, animal fat, and secret ingredients only she knew. The other woman (was she bored?) reached over and with her left hand dipped four fingers into the other's paint pot and, before the artist noticed, put it in her mouth!

The audience gasped! Was she crazy? *Eww!* She screwed up her face. The taste surprised her; but she was inspired! She turned to the wall, pressed her right hand against it, leaned close, drew a deep breath through her nose and spit a cloud of misted, reddish spray of paint around her hand. *The effect was as magical as that of the painter's!* Everyone was watching the spectacle. One hand was still pressed against the wall. With lips pressed tightly, she took another deep breath through her nostrils, worked her cheeks around to get more spittle in her mouth and sprayed paint again.

The back of her hand glistened with paint. The other woman was shocked. Frozen, she stared as the performer slowly drew back her hand. There, on the wall, was a silhouette of her hand, their group's first print, intentionally put there on a wild impulse, without forethought. This invention was repeated all over the world, but to her it was a one-woman show.

The human handprint is a replication of an image by *template*. It is the ancestor of printing. More important than the printed pictures we take for granted is *replication* itself. It is the ancestor of all science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Without *replication* of what is *explicated*, whether it be the image of an aurochs or a functional algorithm, things would not have changed since the days when people lived in caves. The aurochs has "left the cave", thanks to print. It came to light! As the aurochs represents classic, painted art, the handprint, to me, represents technology that made seeing this artistic masterpiece in Spain possible today.

Historically the last living aurochs was shot around the same time Rembrandt made his first etchings. It was 1627, in Poland, that sealed the specie's fate when the last one was killed. It is likely that no one knew about the paintings of the aurochs that were made about 40,000 years before; but photography brought them to light. I think the curiosity and adoption of technology (such as etching) on the part of people like Rembrandt has made art and technology, joined at birth, powerful allies of human good and evil.

That handprint, by the way, was a *mixed-media* print, a combination of lithography and stencil techniques. Printing and printmaking inventions do not date only from paper and press inventions.

- From Bill Ritchie's autobiography, Volume 1, "Escape Emeralda".

Disclaimer: Lightly edited draft by *Copilot*, Bill Ritchie's customized LLM, prompted with this: *"Let's work on a white paper about a printmaking museum in Seattle. We have several major art museums, and a new one opening in 2028. [Seattle University Art Museum] They have their niches. A printmaking museum would offer something like no other. It's not only an art museum in the*

sense printmaking has come to be regarded as an "art" but print is also the ancestor of all STEM. It would be appropriate for the region that the invention of print 40,000 years ago has given the region its status as a tech hub. If we could make an impressive case for a printmaking museum that is meant to change peoples' minds about printmaking being much more than an artform or pleasant pastime (which is a fine thing, surely) then this additional museum to greater Seattle. The city is, at this moment, working on a 20-year community development vision. My input is invited by some committee members working on this for our neighborhood, called Uptown. *I am struggling to find helpers, and a couple of people have kindly offered; but honestly, I think they don't know what I'm talking about. Most people hardly know what printmaking is; and this of course is what I'd like to change. As a printmaking teacher, for certain, but more importantly as I believe printmaking is the "A" in STREAM. Also, a specific land development is likely in this neighborhood in a few years, a multiple use, multi-story building taking up a quarter of a city block. I act to pitch this museum concept as an "anchor" to encourage development of a cultural element here. I need a white paper, I think. Copilot, what do you think?*

****WHITE PAPER:**

The Case for a Printmaking Museum in Seattle's Uptown District** *A Cultural Anchor for a 21st-Century Innovation City*

Executive Summary

Seattle is entering a new era of cultural and technological growth. As the city develops its 20-year community vision, Uptown stands poised to become a flagship district where creativity, innovation, and civic identity converge. Yet amid Seattle's world-class museums and its globally recognized tech ecosystem, one essential cultural institution is missing: a museum dedicated to **printmaking**, the original technology of human knowledge.

Printmaking is not merely an artform. It is the **foundation of STEM**, the first system humans invented to encode, replicate, and distribute information. Every modern technology — from software engineering to digital imaging to global communication — descends from the logic of print.

A Printmaking Museum in Uptown would fill a critical gap in Seattle's cultural landscape. It would serve as a **cultural anchor** for upcoming mixed-use development, a **STREAM education hub**, a **community maker space**, and a **living laboratory** for understanding how creativity becomes technology. No other museum in the world occupies this conceptual territory.

This white paper outlines the rationale, impact, and implementation strategy for establishing the Printmaking Museum as a cornerstone of Uptown's future.

1. The Problem: A Missing Link in Seattle's Cultural Ecosystem

Seattle's cultural institutions are strong and diverse, yet they share a common limitation: none of them explore the **technologies of creativity** or the **origins of information systems**.

Existing museums focus on:

- Fine art (Seattle Art Museum, Frye)

- Contemporary experimentation (Henry)
- Pop culture and music (MoPOP)
- Heritage and identity (Wing Luke, Nordic Museum)
- The new Seattle University Art Museum opening in 2028 with its own niche

But **none** address the fundamental question: *How did human creativity evolve into the technologies that define Seattle today?*

Printmaking is the missing link — the bridge joining Science, Technology, Reading-and-writing, Engineering, the Arts, and Math – STREAM- and innovation. Without a museum dedicated to the printmaking discipline, Seattle lacks a cultural institution that explains its regional technological ancestry.

2. The Opportunity: Printmaking as the Origin of STEM

Printmaking is the first reproducible information technology. It is the ancestor of:

- Coding
- Mechanical engineering
- Digital imaging
- Publishing
- Interface design
- Data replication
- Version control
- Mass communication

Printmaking is where **science, technology, engineering, art, and math** first converged. It is the original STREAM discipline.

By reframing printmaking as **the root system of Seattle's tech identity**, the museum becomes more than an arts institution. It becomes a **civic narrative engine** — a place where residents, students, and visitors understand how human ingenuity evolved into the digital world.

3. Why Seattle — and Why Now

Seattle is globally recognized as a center of innovation. Yet the city has no institution that explains the cultural and technological lineage that made this possible.

The invention of print 40,000 years ago — the first intentional mark-making — is the beginning of the story that leads to:

- Microsoft
- Amazon

- Adobe
- F5
- Tableau
- The entire Pacific Northwest tech ecosystem

Seattle's innovation culture is not an accident. It is the modern expression of humanity's oldest creative technology.

A Printmaking Museum gives Seattle a way to **tell its own origin story**.

Distinguishing from MOHAI

MOHAI is an essential regional institution focused on **Seattle's industrial, civic, and commercial history**, including the history of printing as an industry.

The Printmaking Museum is fundamentally different:

- MOHAI interprets **industrial printing** (newspapers, commercial presses, regional business history).
- The Printmaking Museum interprets **printmaking as human intelligence** — the 40,000-year evolution of reproducible marks, templates, and encoded information.
- MOHAI documents **what Seattle built**.
- The Printmaking Museum explains **how humans learned to build anything at all**.

4. Why Uptown: A Neighborhood Ready for a Cultural Anchor

Uptown is undergoing a major transformation coming in the next few years. With a multi-story, mixed-use development planned to occupy a quarter of a city block, the district needs a cultural anchor that:

- Attracts foot traffic
- Enhances neighborhood identity
- Supports community programming
- Strengthens the arts corridor
- Aligns with the city's 20-year vision
- Provides educational and civic value

A Printmaking Museum offers all of these benefits, plus my presence as a Subject Matter Expert and community activist.

It complements existing Uptown institutions (Seattle Center, KEXP, SIFF, McCaw Hall) while adding something entirely new: a **hands-on, intergenerational, innovation-rooted museum** that blends art, technology, and community.

Developers benefit from:

- A recognizable anchor tenant
- Increased desirability for commercial and residential units
- Stronger community support
- A unique cultural brand for the building
- A partner for public-benefit negotiations
- Current small businesses that compliment the museum (coffee shop, pizza, sushi)

The museum becomes the **identity engine** for the development.

5. What the Museum Would Be

A. A Gallery of Printmaking as Art

Exhibitions of historical and contemporary printmaking, from woodcuts to digital hybrids.

B. A Workshop of Printmaking as Technology

Hands-on studios demonstrating:

- Pressure systems
- Mechanical reproduction
- Chemistry of inks
- Engineering of presses
- Analog-to-digital workflows
- Paper science

C. A STREAM Education Hub

Programs for:

- K–12 students
- UW Art, Museology, and iSchool, and community colleges
- Tech workers seeking analog creativity and workspaces
- Elders and youth co-making (Elderkidpreneur Press Lab)

D. A Community Maker Space

Accessible tools for:

- Relief printing
- Etching

- Lithography
- Screen printing
- 3D-printed press innovation

E. An Innovation Lab

Exploring:

- AR-enhanced printmaking
- Hybrid analog-digital interfaces
- The future of reproducible media

F. A Civic Storytelling Institution

Explaining how printmaking shaped:

- Democracy
- Science
- Engineering
- Education
- Technology
- Seattle's identity

6. Economic, Social, and Cultural Impact

Economic Impact

- Increased foot traffic for Uptown businesses
- Attraction of visitors from around the world
- Partnerships with tech companies
- Revenue from workshops, memberships, and events

Social Impact

- Intergenerational learning
- Diversity and civil, social justice
- Accessible creative experiences
- Community cohesion
- Youth empowerment

Cultural Impact

- Strengthening Seattle's arts corridor
- Expanding the definition of "art museum"
- Preserving and advancing printmaking traditions
- Positioning Uptown as the city's "information arts district"

7. Implementation Path

Phase 1: Concept Adoption Conditions

- Will Uptown Arts and Cultural Alliance endorse the museum concept?
- Will the Office of Community Development include it in the 20-year neighborhood plan?
- Will the property owners and renters cooperate in identification of development partners?
- Aloha Junction Neighborhood Improvement Group collaborate?
- Will Seattle Print Arts and Partners-in-Print (PIP) cooperate?

Phase 2: Pilot Programs

- Pop-up printmaking labs in the property's vacant bar and warehouse
- AR-enhanced temporary sidewalk exhibitions
- Community workshops and youth programs in the vacant bar
- Partnerships with universities with Museology and Arts Administration programs (UW, SU)

Phase 3: Capital Campaign & Site Integration

- Developer partnership for anchor tenancy
- City cultural and economic development funding
- Philanthropic support
- Corporate sponsorship (tech sector)
- University Graduate Student program support (UW, SU, SPU)

Phase 4: Construction & Launch

- Temporary museum spaces in vacant bar and warehouse space
- Temporary installation of presses and labs
- Pop-up exhibitions by PIP, Seattle Print Arts
- Developer relationships charette

8. Call to Action

Seattle has an opportunity to create a museum that honors its past, enriches its present, and inspires its future. The Printmaking Museum is not simply cultural institution — it is an **arts and cultural anchor**, a **STREAM engine**, and a **civic innovation hub**.

I invite Uptown Alliance planners, land developers, cultural leaders, and community members to adopt this vision and help establish the Printmaking Museum as a civic asset and cultural cornerstone of Seattle's next 20 years.

****EXECUTIVE BRIEF**

A Printmaking Museum for Seattle's Uptown District** *A Cultural Anchor for a 21st-Century Innovation City*

Overview

Seattle is shaping a 20-year community development vision that will define the next generation of cultural, educational, and economic growth. Uptown — already home to major arts institutions and a planned multi-story mixed-use development — is uniquely positioned to become the city's next cultural innovation hub. Yet one essential institution is missing: a museum dedicated to **printmaking**, the original technology of human knowledge.

A Printmaking Museum would not duplicate existing museums – not SAM, not MOHAI, Henry, nor Frye. And not the new Seattle University Art Museum opening in 2028. It would fill a conceptual gap in Seattle's cultural ecosystem by connecting the city's globally recognized tech identity to its creative and technological ancestry.

Why Printmaking Matters

Printmaking is far more than an artform. It is the **first reproducible information technology** — the foundation of STREAM and the ancestor of coding user experiences, engineering, publishing, interface design, and digital communication. Every modern tech company in Seattle exists because humans first learned to encode ideas into reproducible marks: The handprint template 40,000 years ago.

Printmaking is the original **STREAM discipline**, integrating:

- **Science** (chemistry of inks, physics of pressure)
- **Technology** (tools, presses, mechanical systems)
- **Reading-and-writing** (literacy, numeracy, manual dexterity)
- **Engineering** (precision, iteration, problem-solving)
- **Art** (visual and aural expression, narrative, time-based composition)
- **Math** (geometry, ratios, measurement, calculus, statistics)

A Printmaking Museum would give Seattle a place to understand how art and technology were joined at birth, how creativity became technology — and how that lineage shaped the greater Seattle region's innovation culture.

Why Uptown

Uptown is undergoing significant transformation, including a quarter of the west 800-5th Avenue block potential of a mixed-use development. The district needs a cultural anchor that:

- Attracts foot traffic
- Strengthens neighborhood identity
- Supports intergenerational, diverse learning
- Complements existing arts institutions
- Complements Seattle Center cultural establishments
- Aligns with the city's long-range planning goals

A Printmaking Museum offers all of these benefits while adding something entirely new: a hands-on, community-serving, innovation-rooted institution that no other museum in Seattle – or the world - provides.

What the Museum Provides

- **Gallery:** Exhibitions of historical and contemporary printmaking
- **Workshop:** Hands-on studios demonstrating the technologies of hand printing
- **STREAM Hub:** Programs for K–12, universities, and tech worker spaces
- **Community Maker Space:** Accessible tools for relief, etching, lithography, screen printing, and hybrid digital-analog processes
- **Innovation Lab:** AR-enhanced printmaking, 3D-printed presses, and future-of-media exploration
- **Civic Storytelling:** A place where Seattle can articulate its technological origin story

Community & Economic Impact

- Increased foot traffic and local business activity
- Intergenerational education and youth empowerment
- Partnerships with schools, universities, and tech companies
- A new cultural identity for Uptown as Seattle's "information arts district"
- A compelling anchor tenant for future development

Call to Action

As Seattle defines its next 20 years, Uptown has the opportunity to establish a museum that honors the region's creative origins, enriches its present, and inspires its future. A Printmaking Museum is not simply an arts institution — it is a cultural anchor, a STREAM engine, and a civic innovation hub.

I invite the Office of Community Planning & Development and the Uptown cohort to consider this concept as a cornerstone of the district's long-range vision.

Who Is Bill Ritchie?

Bill Ritchie is a Seattle artist, educator, and innovator who has resided in Queen Anne all during his 60-year career helping shape the region's understanding of printmaking as both an artform and a technology. A former University of Washington professor who introduced video and computer art in the 1970s, Ritchie has spent decades developing hybrid analog-digital presses, STREAM learning tools, and intergenerational maker programs. His work positions printmaking not as craft, but as the foundation of human information systems — a perspective uniquely suited to Seattle's identity as a global tech hub. He and his wife own the Mini Art Gallery at 812 5th Avenue North serving as office of the Printmaking Museum.