

# Martin R. Baeyens's Study on Serigraphy Printing Exlibris Applications on Digital Printing Floor.

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine Martin R. Baeyens's Digital Printed Serigraphy Printed Exlibris applications in terms of technique and content, and to indicate his contributions to the art of exlibris. Belgian artist Martin R. Baeyens, who blends his original printmaking and graphic design knowledge and experience with the art of exlibris, is one of the important exlibris artists in the world and in our country. In this research, samples of exlibris printed with serigraphy printing technique on digital visual background by Baeyens were examined in terms of technique and content. During this examination, the methods and techniques used by the artist to construct the exlibris were determined and the production stages were observed. Baeyens's exlibris study was analyzed under five different headings: production process, definition, analysis, interpretation and conclusion, and the results were presented within the research. This research on the exlibris made by Baeyens with the serigraphy printing technique on digital printed images aims to be an exemplary study to meet the need to increase the theoretical studies on the art of exlibris.

**Keywords:** Exlibris Art, Digital Printing, Serigraphy Printing, Martin R. Baeyens.

## Introduction

Humanity Ex-libris is a small-sized work of art with an unusual use of typography on it, containing aesthetic qualities, used with a book, expressing who a book belongs to, and having a word to say to the borrower about returning the book. “It literally means “from the library of .....” or “belonging to the library of .....” and was redefined at the FISAE delegate meeting held in 2012 in Naantali, Finland, as follows; ex-libris is a “mark” or “sign” that aims to show or is used to show the relationship or ownership of a book or manuscript with a specific person or an institution” (Pektaş, 2014:10).

The first findings of ex-libris are seen in the seals of monarchs and the states they represent. Coats of arms expressing family lineage, professions and property were frequently used as themes in ex-libris. Until the Middle Ages, each family was expressed with a symbol. Emre Becer states that nobles in the Middle Ages used coats of arms expressing themselves, handicraftsmen engraved their own brands on their products, and emphasises that the factor of low literacy made the expressive power of coats of arms effective (Becer, 2008).

According to the researches conducted to date, it is known that the first and oldest example of ex-libris is a 62 x 38 x 4.5 mm faience plate belonging to the library of the Egyptian King Amenhotep III (Amenhophis) in 1400 BC. Ex-libris, which has a very long tradition, is estimated to date back to the Assyrian King Assurbanipal, who lived in 6000 BC (Pektaş, 2003:15).

In analyses of works of art, in order to obtain information from the work, answers are sought to various questions developed to understand what is intended to be shown in the work, how the work is arranged in terms of design, what the visuals in the work express (if a meaning is attributed) and how successful the work is. The answers to these questions enable the researcher to reach aesthetic qualities (Mittler, 1989, p.48). Martin R. Baeyens’ examination of ex-libris made with silk printing technique on digital background visuals enables consumers/viewers to perceive not only what they see but also what exists in the substructure of the ex-libris.

The examinations are important in terms of reaching clues about the ex-libris, revealing the value of the ex-libris and understanding the ex-libris. The aim of this research, in which some of the ex-libris of the printmaking artist Baeyens, prepared with the digital printing technique and printed with the silk printing technique on the printed ground, are examined, is to indicate Baeyens’ contributions to the art of ex-libris.

In order to understand ex-libris, it is necessary to look at it very carefully and to realise the aspects that distinguish it from other ex-libris and make it more unique. Whether the ex-libris is understandable at first glance or not is shaped according to the wishes of the artist and the person who orders the ex-libris. Of course, easy understanding of the ex-libris is very important not only for the artist and collector but also for the person looking at the ex-libris. In ex-libris, which are intended to facilitate the power of expression, portraits, the profession of the person, animal and plant motifs, people's interests, book and library images or designs consisting only of text are in the foreground. Ex-libris that the viewer cannot comprehend at first glance but makes sense of after thinking about it for a while are mostly ex-libris that contain mystical subjects, mythological stories, signs and symbols.

When Baeyens' ex-libris are examined in general, it is seen that the artist prefers silk printing technique as a technique and constructs compositions with the elements he prefers from nature in his ex-libris.

Baeyens, who applied his first ex-libris productions in high-press technique, was not very satisfied with the situation due to the reactions he encountered. Describing this situation as extremely frustrating, the artist soon turned to silk printing, the new technique of traditional printing techniques (in the conditions of that day), but was again subjected to similar reactions. The artist expresses this situation in his own words as follows; "I clearly saw that the new always frightens the public and they prefer to stick to traditional techniques..." (<https://haberuskudar.com/prof-dr-martin-baeyens-ekslibrisi-anlatti>).

Baeyens, who has used all graphic disciplines professionally throughout his professional artistic life as an artist, has mainly turned towards computer-aided infrastructure and applications in recent years and has not been able to give up using silk printing technique. The artist's productions are recognisable at first glance, and his unique editing and use of space are the first perceptible elements in visuality.

This research, in which some of the ex-libris prepared with digital printing technique and printed with silk printing technique on a printed ground, will be analysed in four stages: identification, analysis, interpretation and judgement. Some of the clues found during identification are narrative features, some are technical and some are visual features. Visual features are found in the analysing phase, while technical and narrative features are found in the interpretation phase.



**Görsel 1:** Martin R. Baeyens, Belçika, S1/8,  
(60mm x 134mm), 2002

## Ex-libris Reviews

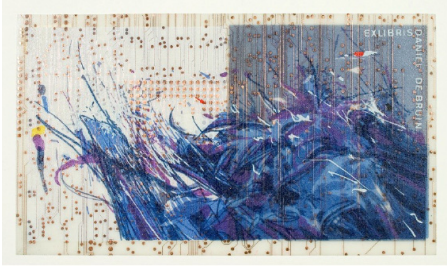
He is a printmaking artist born in Belgium in 1943 who is still continuing his active art life. We know that the artist is a good friend and admirer of Turkey from the works and activities he has done in Turkey in the past. Stating that they have a friendship with the artist that started many years ago, Prof. Dr Hasip Pektaş expresses the artist with the following sentences: “Our five lira banknote, which he saw in the old money collection years ago, excited the artist so much that he returned to us as “Ex-libris” with two portraits and nature breezes printed on it with silk printing technique (Image 1). While we are debating whether it is possible to print on money, Martin R. Baeyens received the Special Prize of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Turkey in the 1st International Ex-libris Competition held in Turkey in 2003 with this contemporary approach and interpretation” (<http://www.hasippektas.com/MartinHk.html>).

This ex-libris, made with silk printing technique on a five lira banknote, is a very important application in terms of transforming a ready-made but idle object into an art object/work. The technique is used in a very professional and clean manner, and there is no effort to create an image in the portraits used. The elements of clarity and simplicity are kept alive.

“When Martin R. Baeyens’ artistic temperament, understanding of art and artistic insights are examined; it is impossible not to see the signs of cleanliness, meticulousness and tidiness in his daily life. The artist works hard, looks, thinks and creates “as if he still has a lot to say”, teaches and communicates his infinite interest in the field of printmaking, regardless of his advanced age” (Konanç, 2019: 54).

Technological development has caused some changes in artistic production. It is seen that the design and printing stages of ex-libris art are also affected by this change. For Baeyens, the phenomenon of designing and creating ex-libris has been a pleasant and interesting impulse. In order to design ex-libris of high quality and aesthetic value, Baeyens states that a good planning ability, artistic intuition and perfect technical skills are required; and he attaches great importance to technological innovations and experimental applications.

The artist sees himself in an intense journey of technical research and discovery, considering abstraction to be at the very centre of the world, the heart of the world in which humans live. Baeyens prefers to print his works with the silk printing technique, which he has mastered in such a way that it constitutes an art form in itself. “Today, the artist, who also makes



**Görsel 2:** Martin R. Baeyens, Belçika, CGD +S1, (90mm x 160mm), Çağdaş Sanatlar Müzesi/Türkiye

effective use of digital technology, does not want to waste time learning the full potential of software to the finest detail, so when the conceptual process of a work is completed, he continues to work alongside a computer technician and after the printing phase of the work until the moment he feels that the result corresponds exactly to what he wants. This striving for perfection and dedication to producing both conceptually and formally perfect works are the most obvious elements observed in the artist's life” (Konanç, 2019: 54).

He has done a lot of research and practice on technological textures and has produced print paintings that are well synthesised with object textures from nature. In the digital-based ones of Baeyens' ex-libris; designing and using typographic elements in the direction of the course shown by the composition elements he used and making a monochrome work polyphonic with a single detail is one of the most prominent technical features of the artist (Konanç, 2019: 57).

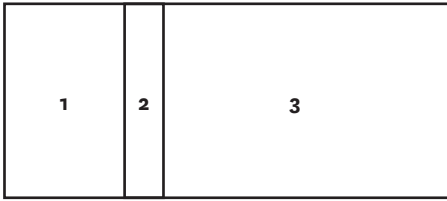
By using electronic circuits between multi-coloured landscapes and plant textures, he has benefited from thematic contrast and achieved rich content and depth effects (Image 2). The artist, who plans the calligraphic elements to be used in the ex-libris at the design stage, emphasises that the harmony between picture and text is extremely important in terms of composition quality. The electronic circuit image (digital print) on the background of the ex-libris work in Figure 2 is the result of the search for different textures, and similar effects have been used many times by the artist. The artist then blends his own unique forms, iconography, vision and calligraphy with the silk printing technique and completes the work by printing on it.

The artist, who always keeps a distance from the common, creates a limited space for experimentation and innovation by positioning himself in a different position. In the interview on “From the World of Ex-libris” held by Üsküdar University Faculty of Communication, Department of Cartoon and Animation on 09.03.2021, moderated by Prof. Dr. Hasip Pektaş, Baeyens stated that he feeds on Nature itself in his works and works to achieve the perfect harmony between technology and nature.

### **Description**

In the ex-libris analyses, it will be examined how the depictions, backgrounds, text parts and parts seen in the ex-libris stand within the whole. In the definition section, the elements that make up the ex-libris will be defined and what they express will be explored.





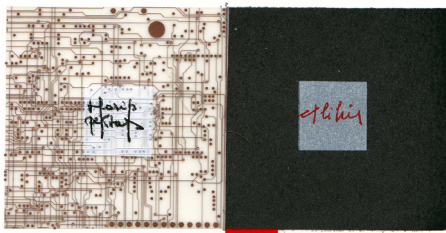
**Görsel 3:** Ekslibrise zemin alanı oluşturma.



**Görsel 4:** Ekslibrise zemin alanı oluşturma.

In Baeyens' exlibris, the artist usually divides the ground into two different areas at the design stage and animates these areas of different volumes with a contrasting narrow piece (Figure 3-Figure 4). He then procures or prepares the visuals he will use within the field particles.

Baeyens has been one of the rare artists among ex-libris artists who does not hesitate to use innovations and open-ended applications; on the contrary, he encourages their continuous application. He has made many silk screen ex-libris prints on digital images of outdated materials of daily life such as theatre tickets, train tickets, museum cards, letters, banknotes, electronic circuit cards, traditional cover patterns, landscape images, etc., and brought these materials back to life as a work of art (Figure 5). Baeyens sometimes designs and creates the entire ex-libris in digital environment (Image 6).



**Görsel 5:** Martin R. Baeyens, S4-Kappa, 119x136mm, 2009



**Görsel 6:** Martin R. Baeyens, (CGD), 42x87mm, 2007

The artist, who usually produces his ex-libris for the application of the composition prepared by applying silk printing technique on digital-based ground areas, prepares the calligraphic elements to be used in his works carefully and in accordance with the texture of the composition, and uses the use of calligraphy on the bright and complex texture structure created with lines quite frequently. In the ex-libris work in the Klaus Rödel collection in Figure 6, there is a digitally prepared portrait in a narrow area on the left side, a calligraphic digital grey area on the right side, and a yellow narrow area just to the right of it. The texture formed by white lines printed with silk printing technique on all these is the connecting element of the portrait with the calligraphic area just below it. In the same image, ex-libris writing is used for name calligraphy as the last layer.

### Analysing

In order to understand how the artistic elements that give aesthetic value to the work are arranged in the analysis phase, art principles will be acted in line with the principles of art, and clues will be found to determine how the ex-libris is organised and created.

The composition distribution of Martin R. Baeyens' ex-libris, which are analysed in this study, is based on the volatile linear texture and final layer calligraphy, which are prepared and printed in digital environment, applied with silk printing technique on backgrounds with different volumes, and which also act as a connecting element. The lines are thick, thin, dense and sparse in order to ensure the stain balance where they are used. Repetitive linear elements are also elements of movement and rhythm.



**Görsel 6:** Martin R. Baeyens, (CGD) Computer generated design , (S1) Original serigraphy , (S2) Mimeography, 52x95mm

The contrasting form used only in one place between the parts of the fields gives dynamism to the work and determines the direction in the harmonic order. When viewed as a whole, it is seen that each element that makes up the exlibris is perceived separately and there is nothing unnecessary. These textures used in different layers are used to create space in the exlibris.

### **Interpretation**

Considering everything analysed on Baeyens ex-libris in the description and analysis sections, the meanings of the compositional elements that make up the ex-libris will be tried to be determined in the interpretation phase. At this stage, different methods can be applied to determine descriptive features. In this section, the ex-libris of the artist selected for examination will be interpreted and their similar and differentiating features will be determined.

As it is known, ex-libris were designed in different themes within the artistic understanding of the periods in which they were found. Portraits, coats of arms, crests, signs, ciphers, architectural and calligraphic elements with special personal characteristics were frequently included in ex-libris. Nature, women, book/library and animal figures were the most frequently used compositional elements by ex-libris artists. Baeyens, who is among the contemporary ex-libris artists, has skilfully used these images in his works. Almost all of the ex-libris analysed from the artist's recent works are based on nature. The artist, who adopts the silk printing technique, applies the technique skilfully and sensitively in his works. He designs the variable calligraphies he uses in all of his works. When the ex-libris of the artist are examined in terms of tonality values, the stain values are provided through the use of colours with different tonalities. While the artist uses the visuals of the materials with national values in the background, he provides the stain order with the colours in the visual to maintain integrity. None of the elements used in the harmonic order are imaginary, they are the ones preferred by the artist from nature itself. When the elements used by the artist in his compositions are analysed in terms of meaning, it is seen that they have universal expressive power.

In the ex-libris produced by the printmaking and ex-libris artist Baeyens, it is seen that he creates a unique internal discipline and produces qualified works in the direction of his own artistic and general aesthetic truths without compromising his principles in a manner open to innovations. Accordingly, when the ex-libris designed on behalf of Artist Baeyens are examined, it is obvious that they show great similarities with the works of the artist.

## Conclusion

It is seen that the adventure of ex-libris art is still very new when compared to other countries. It is known that the first known ex-libris examples in our country were designed for foreign nationals. Non-governmental organisations, institutions and individuals who have made great contributions to the recognition of ex-libris art, to make every book lover the owner of a work of art, and to popularise its collecting and use have pioneered the spread of ex-libris in our country with their activities. Belgian artist Baeyens is among the names that have positively shaped this contribution process. His command of his technique adds originality and strength to his productions. He establishes a strong communication bond with the universal meanings he attributes to his own nature-themed images.

As a result of this research, which consists of Baeyens' ex-libris production process, ex-libris definition, analysis, interpretation and judgement stages, it is seen that all of the artist's ex-libris works selected for examination are nature-based, universal meanings are attributed to the composition elements, and they are designed and printed in line with aesthetic values using silk printing technique on digital-based field grounds.

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Baeyens has done a lot of research and practice on technological textures and has produced print paintings that are well synthesised with object textures from nature. By using electronic circuits between multi-coloured landscapes and plant textures, Baeyens has benefited from thematic contrasts and achieved effects with rich content and depth. Baeyens' ex-libris are characterised by rectangles and squares limiting the picture area. Both different forms are connected to each other with contrasting forms or colours.

After the artist realises the field arrangement to be applied on the ground; he places the typographic elements suitable for the nature of the collage he will use in the small area and moves them to the large area. In the design phase of the production, the artist first plans the field fragments, then creates the connecting elements and textures between the field fragments, and prepares and adds variable calligraphic elements in the next layer. The field fragments provide movement, provided that they often contain a contrasting small area. The repeating elements of the second layer provide rhythm and harmonic order.

Ex-libris art has an important place among the forms of artistic production in order to contribute to the habit of reading books, to make every book



lover the owner of a work of art, and to contribute to the library and library culture. Baeyens, who prefers ex-libris art to express his position and position in the field of art, contributes to the development and dissemination of ex-libris art with his activities and artistic productions in our country and in the world.

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