

The Matrix Conundrum: Part II

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In my original article I used arguments Johan and I discussed to demonstrate that the use of negative wax moulds to produce electroplated typographic plates was possible. In this article I will attempt to show that their use is even more probable. I am doing this because everything we previously discussed could also be applied to a negative metal matrix.

It would be good to begin by focusing on how electroplated printing plates were used. Kašpar and Moravec, the authors of CPSGB Monograph 32, illustrated how the plates for the Dove were mounted in the printing forme (Fig. 1).

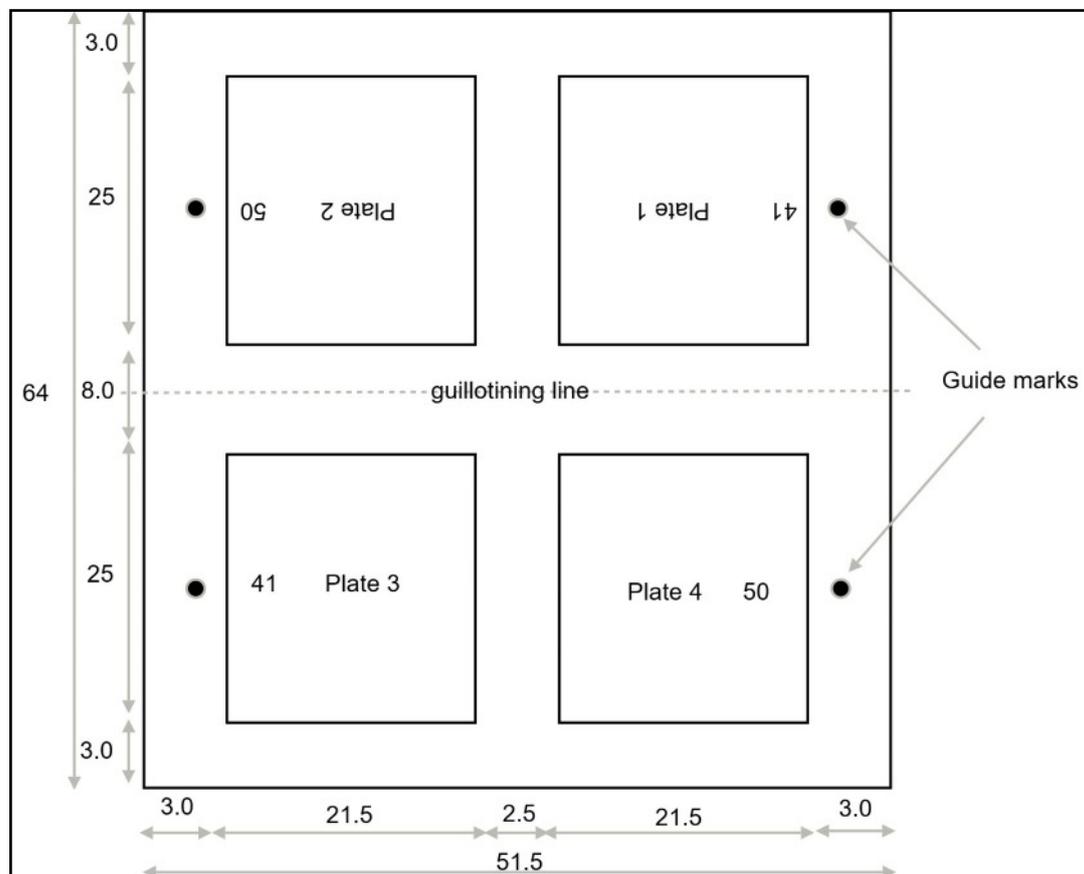


Fig. 1: Printing Forme Layout.
Distances in cm.

The most important aspect of that arrangement is that the plates without exception appeared in pairs or groups of four. Although two denominations may have been placed in the forme simultaneously as two pairs of plates, no instance of the use of a single plate has ever been reported. This implies that plates were always fabricated in multiples of two.

First, consider that it would have been quite easy to first take two or four wax moulds from a positive metal matrix then electroplate them at the same time. Contrast this with the use of a single metal matrix which would have required taking two (or four) electroplated copies sequentially. It becomes obvious that the use of wax moulds would have been far more efficient.

But there is also strong circumstantial evidence to back up the use of wax moulds. The shift from the second to the third matrix for the production of Dove 20 haler Type II plates all but demands the use of wax plates. The second and third matrix shared the same patrice; the only difference between the two is the distance of the stress bars from the clichés. No other matrices in the production of plates display this characteristic. It is clear that the positive matrix suggested by Johan would make this quite easy: new stress bars could be mounted to the platform with the patrice and the task was accomplished. For this to happen when constructing a new a negative metal matrix would require that the patrice used for the original would have to have been archived for later use. Not impossible, but not as easy.

But we may take further evidence from the juncture of the 20 haler second and third matrices. As it turns out, the serial number skip. The second matrix ends with serial numbers 15 and 16 but the third matrix starts with serial numbers 19 and 20. Serial numbers 17 and 18 have never been seen.

It would be reasonable to assume that the missing serial numbers were on plates that failed inspection. This fits well with the wax model: two moulds were taken, two plates produced, etched, and serial number inscribed. The defects were then discovered, the plates discarded, and the fault, likely in the stress bars, repaired by creating the third matrix. The serial numbers there began with the pair of next available numbers, 19 and 20.

This was also possible with a metal matrix, but it seems far less likely. As was said, the evidence is circumstantial, but all in all it seems to bolster the probability for wax moulds and diminish it for the metal theory of plate production.