

## INTRODUCTION TO COPPERPLATE ETCHING



**Overview:** In this course you will learn basic copperplate etching, a classical & authentic fine art printmaking technique used by Rembrandt, Picasso, & other historical masters.

**Workshop highlights:** how to prepare plates; applying intaglio grounds, marking on your plate; safely using acid to etch the copper; preparing fine paper for printing; how to mix and apply ink to your plate; registration for editioning prints; and proper cleaning methods.

**When you complete this workshop,** you will know how to make copperplate etchings from start to finish! If you are an artist working in pencil, pen, or similar styles, this is a great technique for creating MULTIPLE gallery-quality prints from your highly detailed drawings.

**What to bring:** a pencil, a ballpoint pen, a long nail (or awl, or other small sharp tool for scratching into copper plates), and a 4" x 6" line drawing on thin paper (computer paper, notebook paper, or similar). **Your drawing (including text) MUST be a MIRROR IMAGE of how you want your FINAL PRINT to look!**



*Here's an EXAMPLE of how a PRINT is a MIRROR IMAGE of a carved block.*

## Workshop agenda:

### SESSION 1

- 1) Meet & greet + see examples of copperplate intaglio etching
- 2) Orientation to studio, chemicals, and safety
- 3) Demonstrations:
  - Safety: first! Proper use of chemicals, tools, and safety gear (gloves & eyewear)
  - Plate prep: grinding, polishing, cleaning, applying ground, applying backer
  - Image transfer: using Saral paper to transfer your drawing to the plate
  - Mark-making: how to create line, tone, texture, and depth in drawing
  - Paper Prep: tearing paper and making a printing target for perfect registration
  - Ink prep: mixing ink + additives for smooth inking and printing; cleanup

*HOMEWORK: scratch all of your lines into your plate before tomorrow!*

### SESSION 2

- Paper Prep Part II: soaking & blotting (start soak at start of session)
- Etching: ferric chloride use; “stage” etching with liquid ground; cleaning your plate
- Inking the plate: scrape on, scrape off; the “Yellow Pages” perfect wiping technique
- Finally: PRINTING! Press settings, registration, paper handling, drying

*Congratulations! You just pulled a stellar copperplate print. Want to keep up the good work? Here are some resources for learning, materials, and equipment:*

**International Print Center New York:** <http://ipcny.org>

An amazing educational resource with a printmaking glossary, a map of print shops worldwide, and lots of great photos and artist opportunities

**Crown Point Press:** <https://crownpoint.com>

Legendary publisher of fine art copperplate etchings in collaboration with artists from around the world. Located in San Francisco, CA. Their website is a treasure trove of information and photographs. They have a blog/online resource community called Magical Secrets, where you can learn more about intaglio processes, the Crown Point studio, and even intermediate and advanced summer classes in etching. They also have a great online store.

**Graphic Chemical & Ink Co:** <https://www.graphicchemical.com/default.asp>

This is the mother of all printmaking stores, especially for the fine art intaglio artist. Here you can buy copper plates, acids, liquid ground, inks, papers, and more.

**Conrad Machine Co:** <http://www.conradmachine.com/index.html>

If you're feeling REALLY frisky and want a press of your very own, check your local Craigslist first (because SHIPPING a press can be VERY expensive); if there's nothing local, then check the USED section of the Conrad Machine Co. website. Conrad is a legendary press maker, but they've also become a hub for buying and selling used presses of other brands.

Even though Briar Press specializes in forum posts and classified ads for letterpress printing, you can often find used etching presses in good shape at affordable rates. Considering that new etching presses can cost \$20,000 or more, a 24" x 48" press for \$1,500 isn't too shabby!

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