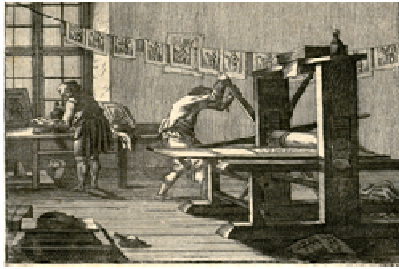


Original Etching

Etching is one of the oldest graphical techniques. The word comes from the Latin „radere“, which means scratching, scraping, removing, etc. Daniel Hopfer (1470 - 1536), an Augsburg military arms etcher, is regarded as the inventor, who introduced the art of etching in the weapons foundry to the service of graphical art.



The desire to duplicate art fascinated the great masters of the 16th century right up to the modern age. Etching is a printmaking technique of the intaglio family and is connected with famous artists such as Rembrandt, Goya, Rubens, Dürer and Picasso.

Today, in the age of mass-production and digital media, etching, next to lithography, is the most applied technique for the manufacture of high quality graphical printing.

Etching techniques

Drypoint and acid-etching are the two fundamental etching techniques. In the case of drypoint etching the motive to be printed is scratched back to front into the printing plate, which is usually made of copper. The etcher only uses human pressure and an etching needle (see figure 1).

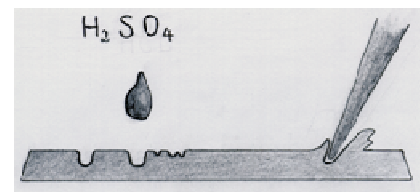


Figure 1: acid vs. drypoint etching

For the production of an acid-etching, the copper plate is covered with an acid-resistant varnish. While drawing, the etcher only penetrates the varnish, but not the metal plate itself. Immersing the treated plate into an acid bath, the varnish functions as a protective layer; only where lines are drawn, the exposed metal plate will be absorbed by the acid. This produces indentions, which correspond to the drawing (see figure 1). After the acidic procedure is completed all remaining acid and varnish is removed from the plate.

The printing process

For each individual print, the plate is covered with copper printing ink, until all the indentions are filled (see figure 2). After dyeing, the ink spread out over the plain metal surface is rubbed off with a bundle of coarse gauze. Only the indentions in the printing plate stay filled with ink (see figure 3).

The plate is then put on the printing work bench and covered with a piece of dampened, hand-made paper. While it is then run through the printing press (with a pressure of up to 16 tons), two felt covers on top ensure a better spreading of the ink and allow obtaining a sharper image.

Afterwards, the paper which is still damp is removed carefully from the printing plate. A perfect image of the etched drawing is now clearly visible on the paper (see figure 4). The completed print is lightly pressed and left to dry for a couple of days. To obtain further etchings the printing plate has to be re-inked.

The final work procedure involves hand-signing each individual print and, if required, additional hand-colouring.



Figure 2

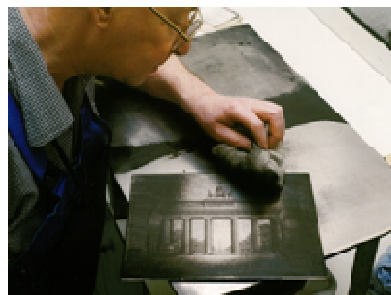


Figure 3



Figure 4