



Sandpaper Aquatint with BIG Ground

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Abstract:This technique uses sandpaper to create a smooth even aquatint on a copper plate grounded with BIG. The grounded plate is run through an etching press with 400 grit sandpaper to create an impression. which is then etched in a Ferric Chloride bath.

Materials:

.032 Copper

400 grit sandpaper

BIG ground

Methods:

Step 1: Plate Preparation

Polish the copper plate, use steel wool, and a scraper to remove any large marks.

Degrease the plate and rinse with hot water (to speed up water evaporation). Dry the plate with clean newsprint.

Non-toxic degreasers/polishers:

-Soy Sauce

-Bon Ami mixed with water to form a paste (if a polish is needed)

Step 2: Ground the Plate

Apply BIG ground using a hand roller and harden in an 275 degree oven for 12 minutes. After removing the plates from the oven allow them to rest for 30 minutes before proceeding with the next step.

Step 3: Impress Sandpaper

Place 4 sheets of newsprint on the press bed to protect the bed surface from the sandpaper. Tape 400 grit sandpaper facedown and along one edge to the top sheet of newsprint. The sheet of sandpaper should be big enough to cover and allow repositioning of the plate underneath. Place the copper plate under the sandpaper and on top of the newsprint and pass through the press for a total of 8 passes changing out the sandpaper after 4 passes. After each pass, slightly turn or shift the plate position to ensure an even impression.

Step 4: Rinse the Plate

Rinse the plate well by sloshing in a water bath followed by rinsing under running water to remove any imbedded carborundum left from the sandpaper. Do not scrub as the particles may scratch the BIG ground.

Step 5: Etch the Plate

Etch the plate was in a vertical etching tank of 38° Baume Ferric Chloride.

Step 6: Remove the Ground

Remove the ground with a clean rag and Soy Solv II.

Final Images and Helpful Hints

The sandpaper creates physical divots in the copper which creates a tone. In order to preserve whites the plate must be physically protected from the sandpaper. We would suggest using contact paper or other such barrier.

We used Zea Mays Fluid Airbrush Aquatint as our stop out.

We used the following etch times for our best results:

0 minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes, 35 minutes, 60 minutes