

## Aquatint

While hard ground is essentially used to create a line, aquatint is used to achieve tone.

Methods for applying aquatint:

**Rosin** - The plate is dusted with powdered rosin which is then melted, and etched.

**Spray paint** - The plate is sprayed with enamel or lacquer based paint and etched. We will be using spray paint only.

Both methods require a clean, dry and grease free plate to begin.

### Spray paint aquatint

Before starting, the plate should be completely grease free and dry. For an average tone 50% spray paint is the right density of aquatint on the plate. For spray paint, we will be using spray lacquer.

1. Before spraying let the exhaust fan run in the spray booth. After finishing do not stop the spray booth for about ten minutes. Spread out paper in the booth on which you can pre-test the spray nozzle and the flow of paint. Place the plate up right in the spray booth.
2. Shake the spray can well. Spray the plate in short stop-and-go motions, starting and stopping off the plate. (For better aquatint, richer tone, be prepared to spray paint several times at several densities. It takes a sequence of spraying then edging then spraying then etching again. For full black areas it may take up to 5 to 9 steps)
3. Remove the plate only after it is dry to avoid releasing the spray fumes into the studio. Throw out the paper. After ten minutes you can turn off the exhaust fan.

### Etching a spray paint aquatint plate

Etch the plate using (a slow bite) ferric chloride. Be sure to keep an eye on your plate for although you will be using time as your guide, the mordant can bite unevenly for a variety of reasons like temperature, amount of surface area being bitten at once, the inclusion of other plates in the ferric with yours.

When the time is up, remove the plate from the ferric, rinse with water, fan or carefully blow dry.

At this point you can stop out the plate in preparation for returning it to the mordant to make still exposed areas darker. This procedure of stopping out, drying the stop out then re-etching the plate in the ferric can be repeated successively to gain gradations of light grey to a deep black.

Contrast in tone with aquatint are achieved by doubling the exposure time in the mordant (ferric) logarithmically not arithmetically. For example, this sequence: two minutes, four minutes, eight minutes etc, will double etched times in progression not one minute, two minutes, three minutes etc.

Caution: be careful not to leave the plate in the ferric too long because at a point instead of getting darker, it will lose its tone completely as the ferric will under-bite the fine grain and create an open bite (creve).

When the etching is finished the spray paint is removed with SoySolv2. Treat the plate gently. To create a richer black the entire aquatint procedure should be repeated once or more each time using a higher percentage of spray paint on the plate.

Tones can be highlighted and altered easily with a burnisher, or scraper and burnisher. Use machine oil such as 3 in 1.

When wiping an aquatinted plate it is best not to use any kind of final paper method wipe as it will most likely remove too much ink. Use a final hand wipe instead.

#### **Gradual aquatint with spray paint (adapted for ferric from Romas Viesulas, Tyler pre 1985)**

1. Spray in short light motions. Continuous spray is more difficult to control. Cover 40 to 50%. Place plate in ferric for 15 minutes.

Take plate out of ferric, rinse with water and carefully dry. Add 10% more spray.

Place in the ferric another 25 - 30 minutes.

Remove and rinse with water. Wash out spraypaint with SoySolv2, degrease with soap and water, dry.

2. Cover 50% of the plate surface with a spray. Place in ferric for approximately 25 - 30 minutes.

This will be a medium/dark grey

#### **Fully Black Aquatint Spray (adapted for ferric from Romas Veisulas, Tyler pre 1985)**

1. First stage: Place bare plate in ferric for 30 seconds to cut the whiteness of the surface.

Remove from ferric, rinse with water and dry.

Spray with 10%.

Place plate in ferric for 10 minutes.

Remove plate from ferric, rinse with water, dry. Spray 25%. Place in ferric for 15 minutes.

Remove plate from ferric, rinse with water, dry. Spray 50%.

Place in ferric for 35 minutes. Remove from ferric and rinse with water. Remove spray lacquer with SoySolv2. Degrease with soap and water or alcohol if needed.

2. Second stage: Spray 50%.

Place in ferric 50 minutes. Wash our spraypaint with SoySolv2, then soap and water, proof or begin working on plate.