



# THE ETCHING REVIVAL

From Daubigny to Twachtman

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**IMAGE CREDIT**

**ON FRONT:** Jean-François Millet, France, 1814-1875, *Going to Work*, 1863, etching, Gift of Allyn C. Poole, 1930.147v

Sir Francis Seymour Haden, England, 1818-1910, *Hands Etching*, 1865 etching and drypoint (sixth state) Gift of Allen W. Bernard 2015.212



## PROCESS

**ETCHING** is an intaglio process in which the image, composed of lines, lies below the surface of the plate. To create the image a polished metal plate (usually copper or zinc) is covered by a hard acid-resistant “ground.” The image is drawn on the plate through the ground with an etching needle or pointed instrument. The plate with the design is then exposed to the acid, which will bite a U-shaped furrow. The breadth of the line can be controlled by the size of the needle point and the length of time the plate is exposed to the acid. A film of ink is applied to the plate, which is then wiped clean, leaving ink in the furrows. The ink is transferred to the paper when the plate passes through a roller press under great pressure. The etching process can be repeated multiple times. New lines can be added, and existing lines can be made darker and bolder, with the areas meant to remain lighter masked with a stopping-out varnish and re-biting of the plate.

Etching is a technique attractive to painters, as the etching needle can be used freely like a brush. To create tone, several methods can be used—cross-hatching, manipulation of an ink film on the surface of the plate, or etching combined with other intaglio processes including aquatint, soft ground etching, and mezzotint.

ACTUAL TOOLS CAN BE SEEN IN THE CASE WITH THE DUVENECK PLATE AND PRINT.

## ETCHING TERMS

**AQUATINT** is a tonal method of printing. Particles of resin are dusted onto the plate and then made to adhere using heat. The acid bites the unprotected areas, creating pits that give the tone its grainy texture when printed. Areas to remain blank are masked with a stopping-out varnish. By varying the size of the particles of resin and the length of time the plate is bitten by the acid, a range of tones can be achieved.

**CLICHÉ-VERRE** (literally translated as “glass-negative”) is a combination of drawing and photographic process. A cliché-verre is produced by using a drawing tool to scratch an image into the coated surface of a blackened glass plate, then placing the plate atop a light-sensitive paper and making an exposure. The print is a positive print.

**DRYPOINT** can be used independently or in conjunction with etching. The artist uses a sharp metal point to draw directly on the plate, pushing the excess metal to the sides of the furrow. The excess metal, called a burr, holds the ink, producing a soft blurry line. Because the image is printed under pressure, the burr does not hold up to large editions.

**FOUL BITING** represents an area of pitting that, because of an ineffective protective ground, has been bitten by the acid.

**INTAGLIO** prints are prints in which the image, composed of lines or tones, lies below the surface of the plate. Intaglio processes include etching, soft ground etching, aquatint, drypoint, mezzotint and engraving.

**MEZZOTINT** is a tonal method in which the printmaker works from dark to light. First, the printmaker uses a serrated chisel-like tool called a rocker to roughen the plate surface with a uniform burr which, when inked, will print black. The image is formed by smoothing the burr so that it holds different quantities of ink. A scraper (tool with a sharp edge) can be used to remove large areas of burr and a burnisher (tool with a smooth edge) used for more delicate work. Highlights are achieved by smoothing the surface so it will not retain ink.

**MONOTYPE** is a unique print. A film of ink is painted onto an unworked metal plate and is then printed on paper. It is a technique that can capture the bravura of the painterly technique.

**REMARQUE** is a quick sketch by an artist in the margin on a plate, often unrelated to the main image. During the etching revival these were associated with early impressions from the plate. Remarques were removed for the printing of a regular edition.

**SOFT GROUND ETCHING** uses a ground that is more impressionable. It is more receptive to texture, such as a drawing made with a pencil through a thin sheet of paper that transfers the image to the plate. The plate is bitten in the same way as an etching using a hard ground.

**STATE** reflects a stage in the progress of an image. An artist will take proofs to check the work and then continue to make changes. If the print is issued in multiple editions on different paper or with changes in inscriptions, these changes are also considered a new state.