

# HOW TO

## TIPS FOR USING HOLBEIN ETCHING CARD

'Intaglio printing' refers to any process of printmaking in which the parts of the plate or, in this case the etching card, that will take the ink are recessed into rather than raised above it (relief printing).

### STEP 1 Preparing the plate

Transfer design onto etching card. This may be done using carbon paper or by drawing directly onto its surface. The image is then indented into the card by using various tools with an even pressure. Tools can include craft knives, compass points, scalpels, old biros, burnishers, etc. As long as the card is noticeably indented or cut, a successful print should result. This is the layer which will hold the ink, whereas the glossy surface can be easily wiped back.

### STEP 2 Preparing the Paper

All intaglio plates are printed on damp paper. This is a crucial step in ensuring a successful print. The dampness gives more flexibility for pressing into the intaglio without the paper splitting or failing to pick up all the ink.

The paper should be prepared beforehand by soaking in clean water. Ideally this is done in a large shallow basin or tub. It can be soaked for around 5 - 10 minutes. It is then taken out of the water, drained and blotted. Blotting paper is ideally used for this purpose but newsprint layers also work. You can layer the sheets of printmaking paper on top of each other to drain, interleaved with the blotting paper. No excess moisture should be visible on the surface of the paper when it comes time to print. It must be damp to the touch, however.

### STEP 3 The etching press

An etching press must be used for the transferring of intaglio prints. When printing, the pressure between the rollers should be set carefully. Too much pressure will cut the paper on the edges of the plate while too little will result in a bad quality print, or no print at all! When rolling the print through you should feel some tension, but not enough to make the press difficult to use. The pressure should also be even from side to side.

### STEP 4 Inking the plate (using etching ink)

Apply the ink using a small squeegee, dabber, stiff cardboard or pad of stiff cheesecloth (scrim or tarlatan). Rub the ink well into the plate so that the ink is pushed into the intaglio marks. The plate is then wiped back carefully in a circular motion from the surface to remove excess ink. This forces ink further into the grooves whilst also removing some from the surface. In the case of etching card it is very easy to remove too much from the grooves due to the shallow nature of the marks. When applying pressure to remove the ink take care to use less pressure on the marks to lift less ink out. When you start to see the design clearly, continue to wiping with a clean piece of cloth, working lightly and consistently so that no obvious smears of ink are left on the surface. \*Old telephone books or newspapers are great for wiping back!

### STEP 5 Taking a print

The plate is positioned on the flatbed of the press and the damp paper laid carefully on top. Felt blankets are then spread over them. The handle of the press is turned to run the bed between the rollers. Once print is all the way through pull the blankets back and peel the print gently from one corner and lay out flat to fully dry.

### STEP 4



### STEP 5

