

Knight, Bird & Burin

A burin engraving by
Evan Lindquist
©2006

Image size (plate size):
202 mm x 124 mm
7 15/16 inches x 4 7/8 inches

Edition: 100 impressions plus 2 Artist's Proofs

Printed by the artist in his private studio.

Part 2

The ink

For many years, I used to combine black pigments with burnt plate oil and grind my ink by hand from a formula which I had developed. About 1983, Graphic Chemical and Ink Co. began producing my ink, and it has been available through their catalog since that time.

GRAPHIC CHEMICAL & INK CO.
728 North Yale Ave. Box 7027 Villa Park, IL 60181 U.S.A.

1 Lb Etching Ink Frankfort Black
No. 2275C

MADE IN USA

The merchandise herein contained or referred to is sold without warranties expressed or implied. These conditions shall not be waived other than by officer of the seller in writing.



The ink straight from the can

When taken straight from the can, the ink is very stiff. For that reason, the manufacturer cannot put it up in cartridges.

Before it can be used, the ink has to be worked up with a putty knife on a glass or marble slab. Working up for a minute or two causes ink molecules to move around and heat up slightly.

After working it up, the ink will still be too stiff for printing, and a conditioner will have to be mixed into it.



Ink conditioner

Generally, an engraved plate should be printed with a very light plate film. However, too much tack (or stickiness) causes an engraved image to print with a thick (or dark) plate film over the image. Ink that is too stiff and too tacky is also very difficult to wipe from the plate, thus causing the engraved surface to wear down rapidly.

An effective ink conditioner will reduce the amount of tack of the ink.

I use Sureset or EZ Wipe compound, but other substances will also work -- lard and waterless hand cleaners for example.



Keep Cover On Can When Not In Use

SURESET

THE SAFE COMPOUND
FOR OFFSET AND LETTERPRESS

Graphic Chemical & Ink Co.

SOLE MANUFACTURERS

725 N. Yale Ave., Villa Park, Ill.

Mixing the ink conditioner

The quantity of ink conditioner to use depends upon various qualities of the conditioner and the ink.

Variations are possible in manufactured batches of ink; therefore, I always test each newly opened can. The age of a can of ink introduces other problems. Ink 2275 has a longer shelf life than most other inks.

Generally, I mix one part of Sureset conditioner with three parts of ink, carefully avoiding excessive conditioner.

If an ink conditioner is not available -- Suret, EZ-Wipe, lard, waterless hand cleaner (Go-Jo, Mac's, Goop, etc.) -- a drop or two of Burnt Plate Oil #3 can be used to thin the ink instead.



Applying ink to the plate

After the ink has been mixed completely and is consistent throughout, the ink is applied to the plate. Using the putty knife that mixed the ink, I carefully place some ink onto the plate. The steel knife must not touch the plate.

A squeegee will be used to spread the ink over the entire surface.

I locate the dollups of ink where the squeegee will begin to spread them first along the left edge of the plate -- from top to bottom.

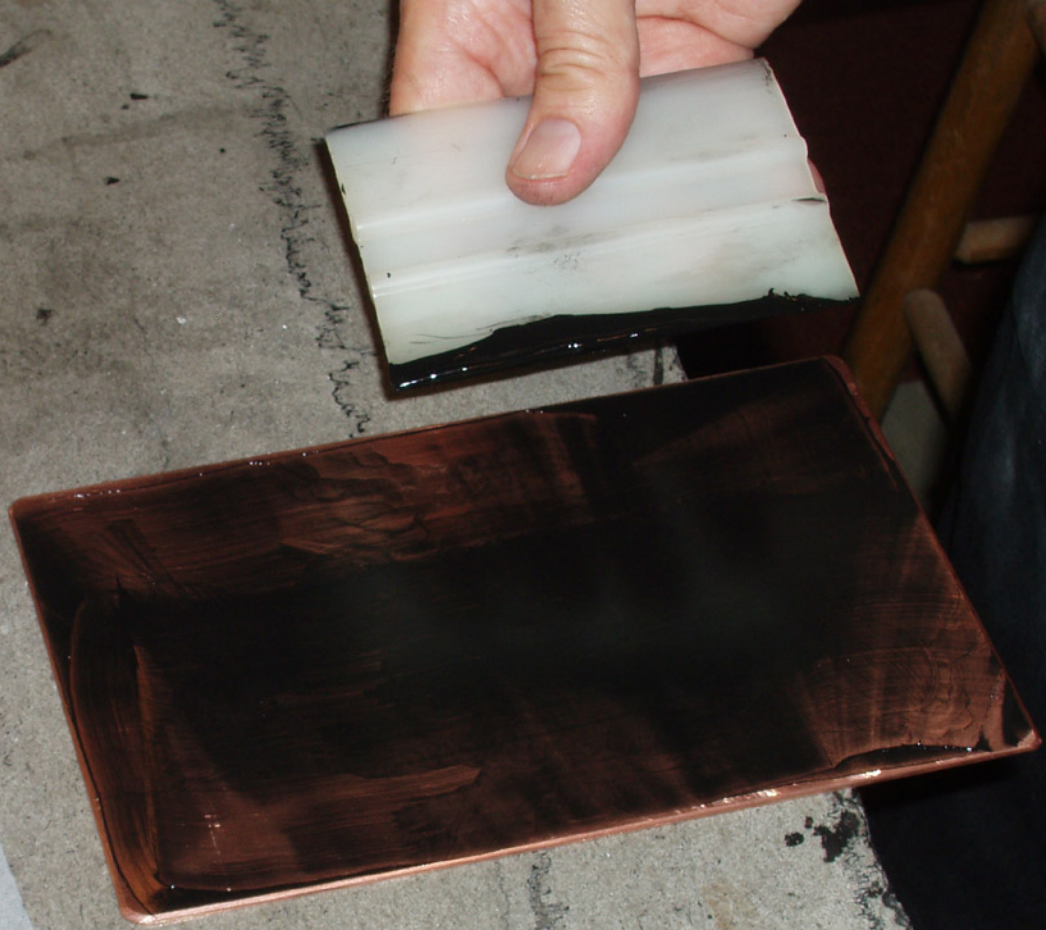


Using the squeegee

After the squeegee has spread ink along the left edge of the plate, I turn the plate around and squeegee the other edge -- again from top to bottom -- and the strip down the center. Finally, I squeegee along the short edges of the plate.

I like to use this type of squeegee -- sometimes called a plastic spatula. But I keep it clean and sharp. It is easily sharpened by running its edges along either a piece of sandpaper or the mill bastard file.

A square piece of mat board also works well; however, the edge of the mat board can be used only one time. Fibers may contaminate the ink.



Wipe the plate

The plate is being wiped with a tarlatan. At first, the role of the tarlatan is to make certain that all lines have been filled with ink. Then it may begin to remove excess ink.



Finish wiping the plate

As the image becomes more visible, the first tarlatan is exchanged for a cleaner one. The pressure applied while wiping is much lighter.

Often, I finish the wiping by swiping my palm across the surface a few times, but that was not done on this plate.

When the surface appeared to be finished, the edges were cleaned with a paper tissue.

Prepare the paper

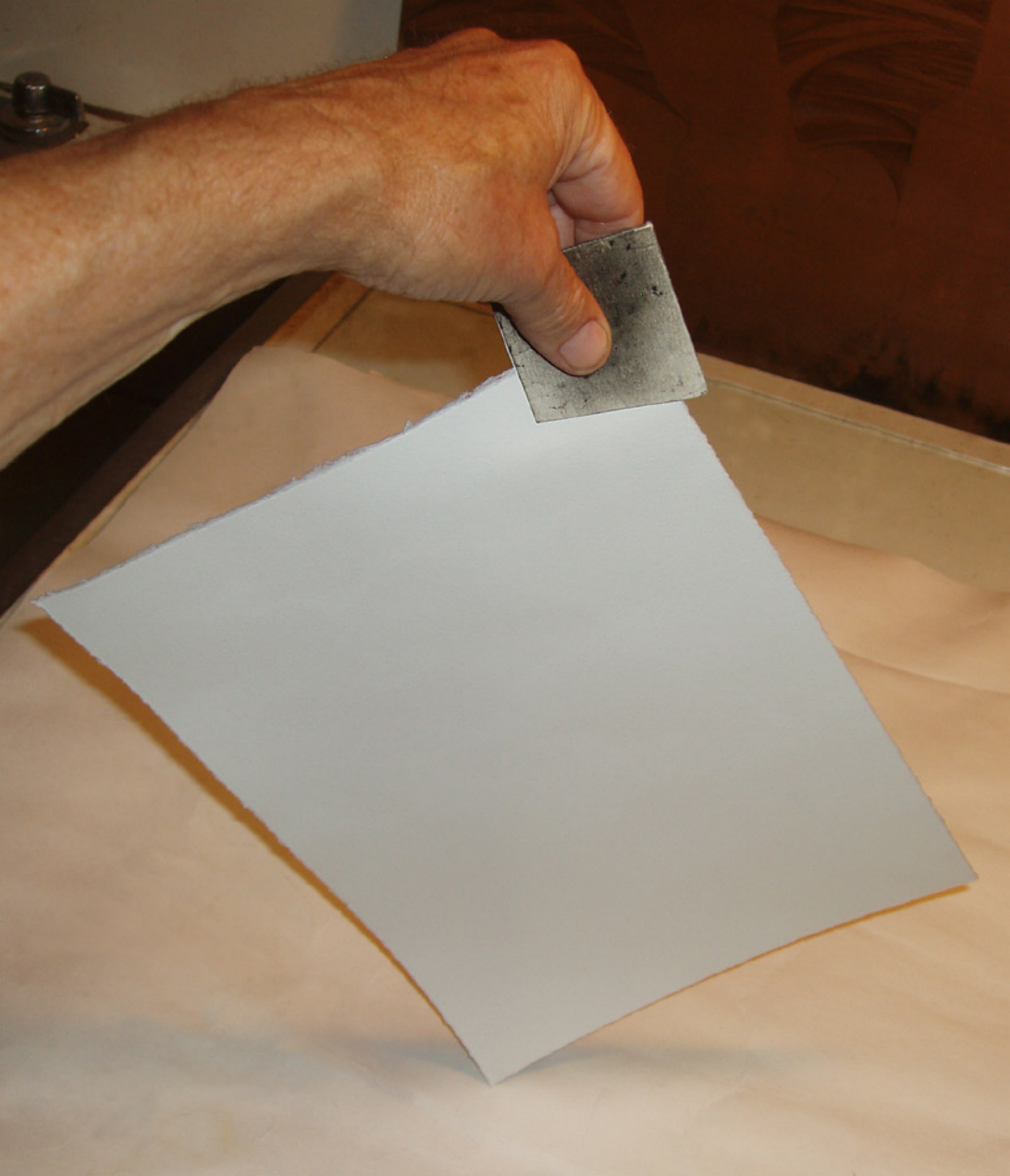
I printed a few impressions each day around a very casual printing schedule. Rather than prepare all sheets at once, I dampened only 10 or 15 sheets at a time.

The paper used for this edition was Somerset Satin, a 22 inch x 30 inch sheet with watermarks in two corners. I tore each sheet of paper into five small sheets, each approximately 12 inches x 9 inches with torn deckle edges.



The damp paper

The small stack of paper was kept between blotters. The top sheet was placed on top of the blotters to air dry for a few while the plate was wiped.



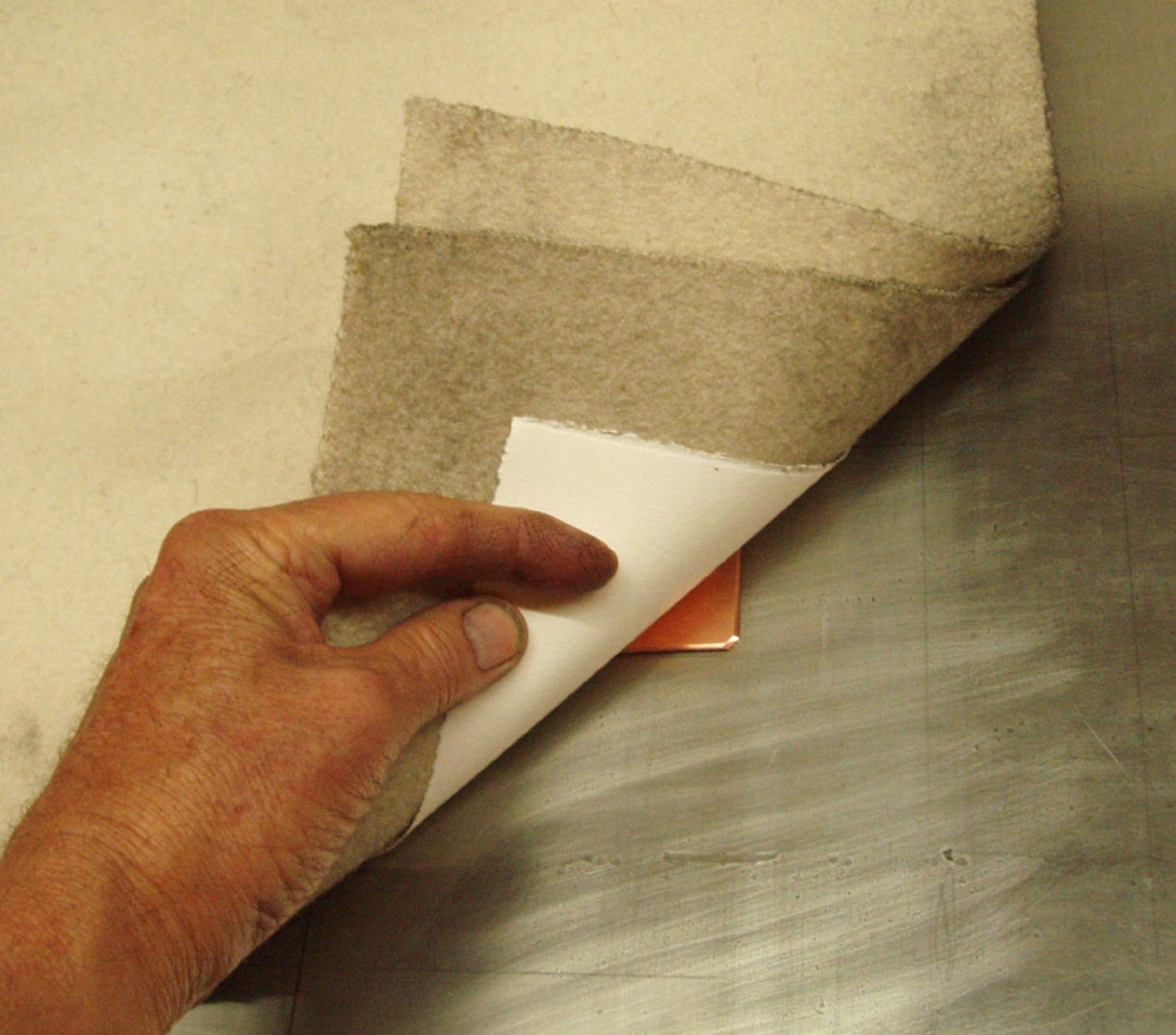
The press

The bed of the press has been covered with a sheet of 16-gauge stainless steel. A template was drawn on the stainless steel plate with a pencil as a guide for placement of the plate and paper. The plate is in place. The damp paper will be placed over it.



The felt blankets

The photograph shows a corner of the copper plate. Over it is the damp paper. Two woven felt blankets were used above the paper.



The woven felt blankets

Most intaglio plate printers use a different scheme of press preparation, but I always use only two woven felt blankets as shown in these photographs. This set up prints crisp lines with an even plate film, both of which are essential for an engraving.

I've never been pleased with the quality of any impression that used either compressed felts or thin sizing catchers.



State I

The photograph shows two impressions pulled from the first state of the plate. I usually pull two or three proofs and draw on them to try out different solutions to complete the composition. Pencil, charcoal, or just a finger rubbed through the wet ink are useful media for this idea-generating process.

State I shows the three objects (Knight, bird and burin) well established. The proofs will be used to try out some ideas for developing the negative space.



State I pencil guide

This is my first opportunity to see how the plate will print and how the objects are working out. The Knight, bird and burin are well established in space. The shapes of the negative space are interesting, but my next step will be to create strong Line Directions and Rhythms to organize the negative shapes into areas that will advance and recede.

Much of this process is like doodling. A few tentative lines here and there with a graphite pencil help the idea to evolve.

The landscape is reminiscent of the one in Dürer's print. I sketched in a few buildings to suggest the city in his print, but I really didn't like that as part of this composition. I decided to ignore the city.

This proof will be my guide as I develop the composition. I won't follow it slavishly, but it shows the general direction.



State II

After considerable work in the negative space, State II was printed. The photograph shows two impressions taken from the plate.

This time, instead of drawing directly on one of the state proofs, I drew on an inkjet-printed photograph.



State III

The changes drawn into State II were mostly small details and some areas that needed to be darkened.

At this point, I had determined that the city would not be shown. Dürer always signed his prints with a different version his memorable "AD" monogram, and in keeping with the satirical spirit of this project, I decided to do something similar. No changes were shown on this proof of State III. They were "ad libbed" onto the plate.



Finished state

The "EL" monogram is the most obvious change from State III, but there are other small additions that were also important. This photograph (of the finished state) was scanned on a scanner. The preceding photograph of State III was photographed with a digital camera. There is a striking difference in quality between the camera and the scanner.

To anyone who might desire to analyze the final composition, I would like to point out that my main focus of concentration was on the element of Space, not Line.

Even though the composition was made up of Lines, their function is to organize Space to depict advancing and receding planes in depth (3-D Space) as well as upon a flat picture plane.

While working on this print, I was most conscious of the need to organize Line Directions, Rhythms, and Repetitions.



Knight, Bird & Burin (AP) Evan Lindquist ©2006

Flattening the prints

The copy press in this photograph was originally made for banks and professional institutions to make copies from original documents. The Xerox copier made this type of press obsolete.

In my studio, the old copy press is used for flattening prints that would otherwise be wavy.



Misting the prints before flattening

The prints are laid out and misted with water on both the front and back. Then they are stacked for a few minutes to allow the fibers to absorb moisture away from the surface. As the fibers absorb moisture, the paper expands slightly and becomes softer.



Stacking the prints before flattening

The bottom panel is laid in front of the copy press, and one hot blotter (19 inches x 25 inches) is laid upon it.

Two damp prints are placed on the hot blotter (as shown in the photograph).

Another hot blotter will be placed on top of the prints.

A panel board will be placed on top of the blotter.

Three more of these hot sandwiches may be stacked in front of the copy press.



Pressing the prints to flatten

The photograph shows four sets of sandwiched prints/blotters in the copy press. They will be flat when removed from the press.



End of photographs and description
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