

# PREFACE

Photogravure is the term for a photo-mechanical reproduction method developed by the Czech painter and photographer Karl Klič at the end of the 1870s. It was an intaglio printmaking method, which involved etching the photograph in a copper plate with a view to mass reproducing the image on an etching press. At the time it was considered a revolution in the graphic industry. The invention of the photogravure technique all of a sudden made it possible to reproduce photographs in mass media.

As was the case with many other crafts, the development began to grow fast during the industrial revolution, and the photogravure soon became a labor-intensive and inefficient method in comparison to mass production of books, maps, magazines and other printed material. New methods of industrial mass production replaced the photogravure. However, the photogravure has always been considered a sublime method for the production of small and exclusive editions of photographs, especially among artists. Even today the photogravure is considered a particularly refined printmaking technique.

Like most others printmaking techniques, the photogravure technique had, however, an environmentally and health-damaging disadvantage, as it involved the use of toxic etching grounds, chemicals, organic solvents and acids such as those used for traditional etching techniques.

Thanks to the American printmaker Dan Welden's experiments with photopolymer plates in the late 1970s, the focus increased on alternative and more environmentally friendly materials within the fine art of printmaking. Whether it was the threat to health and the environment posed by the technology of conventional intaglio techniques, or it was because the technique itself was so difficult to master with the classic materials, I do not know, but the happy outcome was the introduction of photopolymer plates and photopolymer films in the art academies at the end of the 1980s. Thanks to pioneers such as the Danish printmaker and photographer Eli Poinsaing, Australian Keith Howard, American Mark Zaffron, and others, photopolymer plates and photopolymer film were quickly accepted as an environmentally friendly and uncomplicated alternative to the classic materials used in photogravure. With the photopolymer plates one could now create results that were completely on a par with the best within the traditional photogravure.

Since I published my first book on the subject in 1995 and the year after my "Handbook of Non-Toxic Intaglio" I have held myriad courses and conferences in these techniques around the world, and my books on the subject have been published in several editions in Danish, Flemish, French, English and Spanish.

It is the experience from the last 30 years with my beloved media, the photogravure, I here present in an updated form.

*Copenhagen, January 2021*

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