

# relic

A RETURN TO CRAFT

June 2015

## *The Nature of a Mad Potter*

An unrefined, refined process with  
Matt Young

## *The Blondest Printer*

This DIY intaglio printer can make a  
thing or two of a blank slate of metal.

U.S. \$6.99 Canada \$8.99

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How to | Printing with Cyanotypes  
What's Happening | The CoRK Art Gallery  
Papermaking, Vegan Style

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## SMALL TALK

*vintage aesthetic*  
“I’m not sure what I would do without my boombox.”



# A DIY Screen Printing Toolkit

We caught up with the Earnest Printer to ask what he kept in his tool pouch.

**1 Squeegees** “Like my screens, I like to keep an assortment of squeegees to tackle different size areas that I need to pull ink across. If I have a smaller area to pull, I use my smaller squeegee and vice versa. It’s best to have and clean as many as you can, so that you cut down on mess and mixing of inks.”

**3 Inks** “I use water-based acrylic inks most of the time. I tend to stick to Speedball inks, and I stock up on my cyan, magenta, and yellow, as well as black and white. I come by specialty colors or inks with special features, such as glowing in the dark. I tend not to use these up, so they start stacking up.”

**5 Screens** “I have a variety of mesh counts and sizes because it depends on what kind of inks you’re using; if you’re using a thick ink, you need larger holes in your mesh for the ink to pass through, and for thinner ink, more holes.”

**2 Brushes and Blackout** “If you blow out any emulsion when exposing the screen, you use the blackout to refine the edges of the emulsion. This makes sure that your lines are crisp and intentional. You can also take this substance and paint it on a screen to create stencils or one color prints.”

**4 Baby Oil/Paper Towels** “Baby oil is a cheap way to make transparencies for exposure. When you print your image, you can flip it over and rub baby oil on it to use the paper as a transparency. The paper towels are just for cleaning my hands and squeegees so that ink does not spread throughout my house.”

**6 Drying Rack** “I use the heck out of this little thing whenever I’m doing a run. I drag it out from under the table and put it somewhere where I can get to it easily and quickly so I can tackle as many prints as possible and not run out of space for things to dry.”

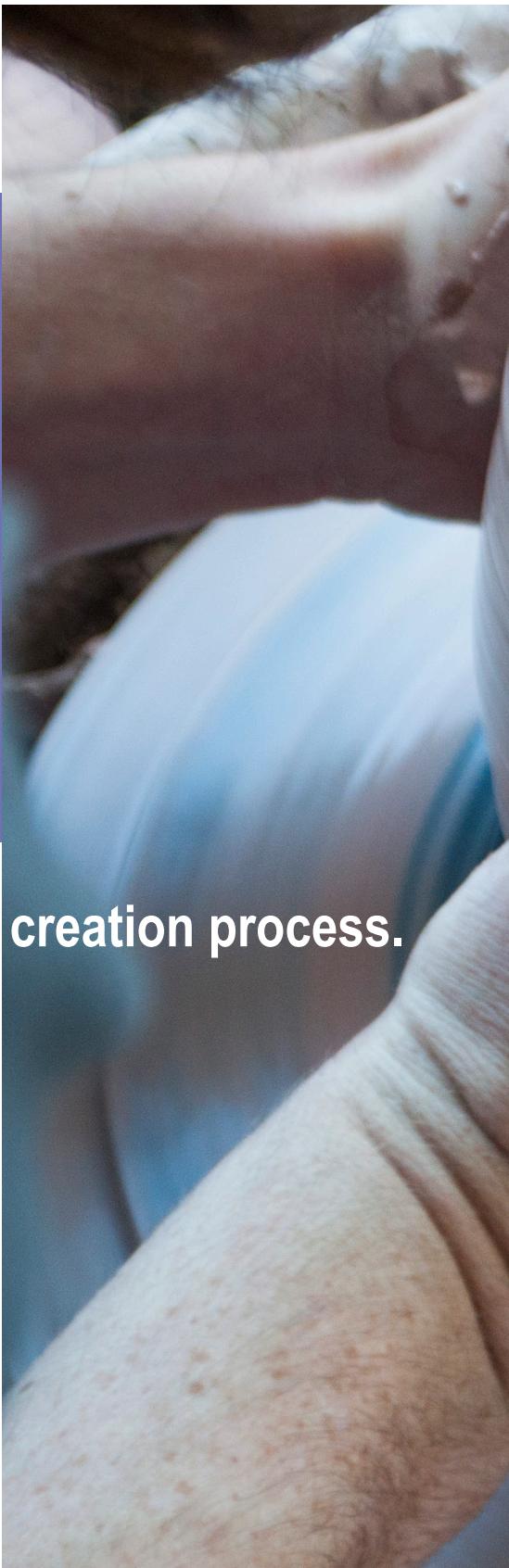
# *the* *Nature* *of a* *Mad* *Potter*

We follow Matt Young's ceramic creation process.

Words by Kim Kiser

Photos by Mel Young

Christian Wildes likes to start his days walking through the woods near his Millbrook, Ontario, home and studio. Following the paths that cut through cedar groves and meander along Baxter Creek, he finds his so-lace, his inspiration. "it's where I feel happy to be alive," says the soft-spoken printmaker. That sense of tranquility comes across in his work. When looking at Raab's etchings of wilderness landscapes, one can almost hear the water trickling over the rocks in a stream, the whispered music of the wind passing through a glade of trees. "There is a poetic quality to [his art] almost romantic at times, and that appeals to people," says Illi-Maria Tamplin, director and curator of the Art Gallery of Peterborough in Peterborough, Ontario the gallery, currently has two of Raab's etchings hanging including River of Dreams, a dark, almost ethereal portrayal of a stream at daybreak. Raab's work is unique not only because of his interpretation of nature but, also, his ability to combine





### the foundation

After building the pot up a to a certain form, Matt plots his next move.



**clay master**

Matt softens up a sample of clay to throw a pot with.

nature but, also, his ability to combine photography, intaglio printmaking and watercolor painting. "Each has its own voice and makes its own statement," he says. The photographs allow Raab to capture moments in time and work representationally. Intaglio printmaking techniques give tonal and textural qualities to the images, and by adding a watercolor wash, the artist can put his personal stamp on his prints. Raab, who works out of a converted horse barn, uses scenes from such well-known sites as Yellowstone, Grand Teton and Yosemite national parks, as well as the wilderness near his home, as the basis for his etchings. "He gets to know the details of the landscape, and brings that into his work," says Tamplin. Attention to detail has earned the printmaker awards and recognition in Canada, the United States, Colombia, China and elsewhere around the world.

### Tradition Meets Technology

Raab got the idea for marrying photography and intaglio printmaking in the mid-1970s, when he sold photo silkscreen prints of cottages near Bancroft. (It was one of many jobs he held—including working as a bulk oil

pump man in Norman Wells, a geological surveyor in the high Arctic, and a purser on the Mackenzie River—before becoming a full-time printmaker.) When creating an etching, Raab, who still uses the Olympus OM1 camera he bought in the early '70s and 400 ASA film to shoot images, starts with a hand-manipulated positive print on high-contrast film. He places the film on a photosensitive, emulsion-coated copper or zinc plate and exposes it to ultraviolet light. As light passes through the film's open areas, it hardens the emulsion into an acid-resistant block-out. Where the positive image blocks the light, the coating washes off, exposing the plate to the action of the acid in which he bathes it. The acid eats away at the metal, creating grooves and textures. The deeper the lines, the more ink they hold and the darker the tone they produce. Raab then works the plate by hand, using traditional intaglio techniques: aquatint, an 18th-century process that reproduces the effect of a watercolor wash; line engraving; mezzotint; and dry-point. When making each print, he hand-inks the plate, wipes it and places it on the 30-by-60-inch bed of his hand-operated press to pull the image onto damp intaglio paper. Despite his

dedication to the 17th-century-style press that he bought from a Czech tool-and-dye maker in Toronto nearly three decades ago, Raab doesn't shun technology. Taking digital scans of black-and-white images directly to film, he says, is easier than trying to develop 2-by-3-foot sheets of litho film in his dark-room. "As long as the results I'm looking for are there, why not use it? As long as one is true to one's convictions and has something to say, that's more important than the way they go about expressing it," he says. The ability to observe, absorb and express what was happening around him led Raab to a career as an artist. He discovered printmaking as a student at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario. After graduating in 1971 with a diploma in fine arts, he enrolled in the University of Toronto as an extension student to study in the printmaking studio.

### The Unpredictability of It All

"I love the medium and what it has to say. I love the different stages, and the ebb and flow of working with inks and metal plates," he says. "Other mediums are more instantaneous; you immediately see what you have. With printmaking, you learn to control the acid bites, the depth of the engraving, the nuances of inking and wiping the plate." Printmaking leaves little room for error, and Raab admits that he sometimes has to give up on a plate

that doesn't seem to be working. "If the plate is bitten too deeply, you can flatten the metal to the point where it holds ink but it's all hand work, and the amount of time it takes may not be worth it," he explains. Sometimes what appear to be mistakes end up becoming what the artist calls "happy accidents." In the case of a work called Lire Oaks, Raab intended to create a mood of low sunlight slashing across curling branches and spilling onto the grass. "When biting the plate, my mind was elsewhere. It ended up being bitten much too long," he recalls. Raab colored the dark image with soft greens, yellows and blues to instead make it look like the trees were being illuminated by moonlight. "[The end result] turned out to be far more interesting than what I set out to do," he says. Raab makes no more than 70 prints in an edition and sells them through dealers, in galleries and at the dozen shows he attends each year. "I've heard printmaking called a democratic art form because there's enough of it to go around," he says with a laugh. "For people who love original art and want to collect work in which the artist's hand is directly involved, buying an original

*I love the medium and what it has to say. I love the different stages, and the ebb and flow of working with clay; that push and pull, that yin and yang, if you will.*

#### flatten it out

Matt uses tools to flatten out the surface of the pot revealing the base pot.



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10 Tips for Film Camera Caretakers  
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