



Credits to—[Jan Petterson](#), (2017). Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO). **Statement:** there is nothing superficial about the surface. The photogravure technique of print-making is the equivalent for the study of *surface*, as photography is to perspective. Arguably—and we hope, demonstrably—the optical illusion of the surface is complementary to the optical illusion of perspective. That is, the possibility that something indefinitely *remote* can be *proximally* within arms reach: the ground premise of the image and its possibility. This series of leaflets reveals the dual nature of the surface (as *above*), and the implications of this joint duality for [investigative aesthetics](#). Featuring photogravure as the study of the surface as datum, and thereby an artistic proposition on the aesthetico-epistemic research-operations that can be achieved through it (with implications beyond the technique in isolation).

In a conversation with Jan Pettersson we agreed that it would be interesting to discuss *photogravure* in the light of some *broad* categories proposed and elaborated by [Sarat Maharaj](#) at the Artistic Research Week at KHiO in 2018. These categories were: *art-research*, *artistic research* and *artistic research*. That is, research done on, for and with art. A variation on this triangle.

This discussion became relevant to us, in the context of an international conference hosted by Jan Pettersson at KHiO in 2015: *Printmaking In The Expanded Field* (PITEF). This was an arena designed by him that would put high demands on generosity and criticality between practitioners and theoreticians, in order to hatch insights to be *incorporated* in printmaking.

The thinking initiated by this initiative took place in two stages: **1)** on stage at *conference* and **2)** in the process of editing and making a *book*. The book continued the work of the conference and the title was identical, with an addition: *A Pocket Book for the Future*. The book also contained elements prompting a reflection on the transfer *from* the conference *to* the volume.

In this way, two temporalities—the time of the *conference* and the time of the *book*—were kept in a single vision: allowing for a stereoscopic view of the conference and the volume in the eyes of the beholder (*adding* a repertoire of investigative aesthetics to plain reading; instantiated by every detail of the item...its pocket size, the softness of the paper, the typography and index).

In sum, the same principle of constraints were applied twice: **1.a)** the practitioners were constrained to dig *deeply* into their reflective practice onstage with theoreticians at KHiO; **1.b)** the theoreticians were similarly invited, if not outrightly constrained, to *expose* their practice [if only, by bringing a stack of books onstage and handling them in conversation].

The publication of the book-volume followed the same principle but with a different weight/emphasis: **2.a)** the practitioners worked on the adaptation of their conference contributions as building blocks for a book; **2.b)** the theoreticians contributed with structuring elements for the volume [be it in terms of discursive propositions, or directly with sheet-elements to build the book].

In the present query on photogravure, this prehistory is relevant, because it incorporates the principle of a dual process joined into a single work. Indeed, the photogravure process can be divided into **1)** a *wet* phase; **2)** a *dry* phase. A wet phase that critically depends on *drying*. And a dry phase that critically depends on *wetting*. That is **1)** the preparation of the *plate*; **2)** the *printing*.

In both the wet and dry phases, photogravure is a process which, by virtue of its undeniable technical and material complexity, becomes more a method of *study* of the photographs it is made to process, than a simple *transfer* and an alternative form of print. Moreover, the wet and dry phases—taking place in separate spaces—reverses the order of the production in photography.

In photography, the shot (*dry*) takes place in an instant and before the work in the dark-room (*wet*), which is elementary and short in *comparison* to photogravure. Moreover, while photography readily enters into the history of optics and *perspective*, photogravure presents the occasion to study the optical illusion of the *surface*: owing to the work and care put into it in the process.