

Researching historical print archives to integrate 'found' knowledge into post-digital printmaking workshops

I have for the past 25 years researched old photomechanical processes where my main focus has been especially photogravure / heliogravure on copper.

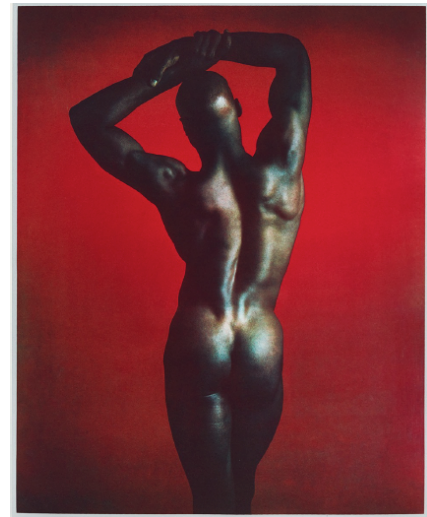
For those of you who does not know what a photogravure looks like, here is some examples of photogravures



Photogravure by George Petite
Familie Hollandaise



Edward S. Curtis, Door of Lodge, Grizzly. Flathead, 1910, Courtesy Preus Museum. Horten, Norway



Robert Rauschenberg Untitled # 1 from the Ken Moody portfolio, Courtesy of Graphic Studio University of South Florida, USA



Lucia Aragon "Khu Bird" direct gravur.



Cathrine Liberg "The Wealthy consort" Photogravure



Cathrine Liberg "The Sarong Kebaya" photogravure

One of my art projects that came out of the research was The True Lasse a project with 60 photogravures in color. Here are 3 examples



Jan Pettersson

"The True Lasse"

photogravure

Archives

The types of Archives I have researched are, Museums, collections, libraries, human archives i.e. persons with knowledge, internet archives & archives that re-cycle history i.e. flea markets. Each of these archives play an important role in my research and the use of collected information or acquired objects as books, plates & prints.

Why would you then consider researching these archives & what would come out of it & how it could be used in a contemporary context in teaching workshops.

Part I Already executed research in archives

For my first publication Photogravure an Archaeological Research the following institutions were visited.

The Print Department at Modern Museum of Art New York, USA, 1995

<https://www.moma.org/collection/about/curatorial-departments/drawings-prints>

Biblioteque Nationals print collection, Paris, France, 2002

<https://www.bnf.fr/en/richeieu-library-prints-and-photography-reading-room>

Preus Photomuseum in Horten Norway 2003

<https://www.preusmuseum.no/eng>

Musée Goupil in Bordeaux, France, 2003

<https://www.musee-aquitaine-bordeaux.fr/en/article/goupil-museum>

The main focus here was to acquire as much information & knowledge on the photogravure process both technical, historical & contemporary through prints, plates & books.

In conjunction with visiting these important print archives a number of human archives were visited & interviews were executed with well-known photogravurist's as Jon Goodman in Massachusetts USA, Deli Sacilotto & Paul Taylor in New York, Johan de Zoete in Amsterdam & Lasse Mellberg in Sweden.

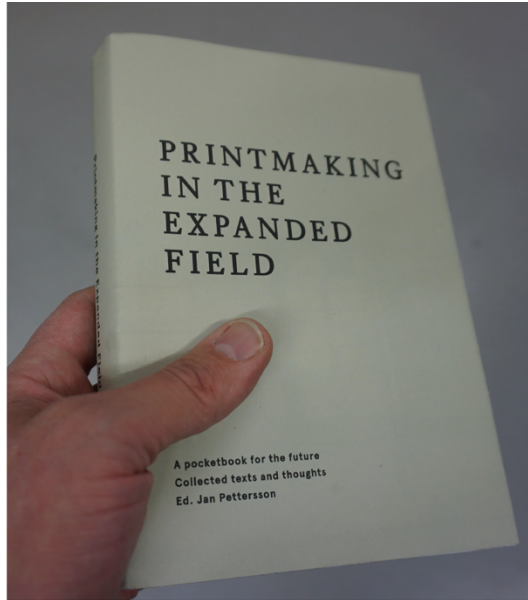
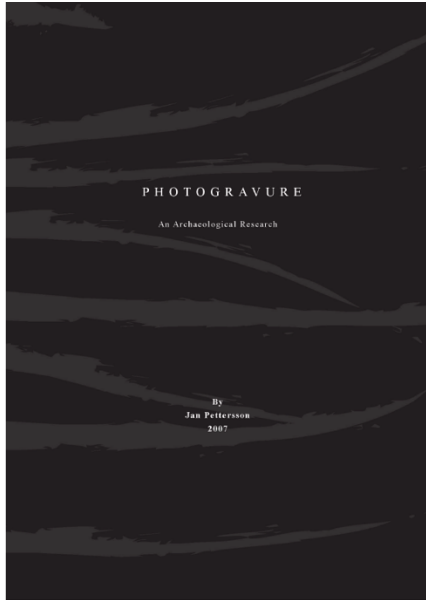
<http://jgoodgravure.com/about.html>

<https://www.renaissancepress.com>

<https://johandezoete.nl/about/>

<https://www.alternativephotography.com/copper-photogravure/>

The collected information from these visits & interviews together with already acquired & grounded knowledge was accumulated in my 1st publication ¹Photogravure an Archaeological Research in 2007 & re- contextualized thoughts on the expanded field of print was put forward in the publication ²Printmaking in the Expanded field 1st edition 2017, 2nd edition 2019



Photos Jan Pettersson

The research has now moved into its 2nd stage.

Part II current research in archives .

For this the 2nd part of the research I have visited the following Institutions.

London, St Bride Foundations Library 2020

<https://www.sbf.org.uk>

Atelier-Musée Imprimerie(AMI) at Malesherbes 2021

[Atelier-Musée Imprimerie](#)

Musee Arts et Metiers, Paris 2021

<https://www.arts-et-metiers.net>

The Chalcographie du Louvre, Paris 2021

<https://ateliersartmuseesnationaux.fr/en/engraving/conservation-of-a-historic-collection>

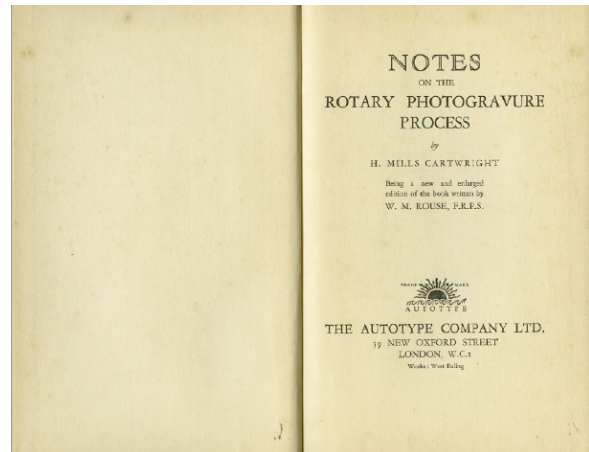
¹ *Photogravure and Archaeological Research*, KHiB 2007, ISBN 82-8013-059-4

² *Printmaking in the Expanded Field*, KHiO 1st Edition 2017, ISBN 978-82-92613-66-5 & 2nd Edition 2019, ISBN 978-82-92613-86-3

London, St Bride Foundations Library 2020



Photos Jan Petterson "the end wall in St Brides Reading room"



Writings by H. Mills Cartwright published by the Auto type company who produced pigment paper for photogravure

The St Bride Foundation was set up in 1891 it was created to serve the print & publishing studios that were beginning to grow rapidly on Fleet Street. Over more than 1 century it has established itself as an extremely important archive concerning graphic design, printing & publishing. The library is without a doubt the largest concerning the concept of the print in the world. It has over 100.000 items. What I was interested in was to use their reading room which is open twice a month or by appointment.

I visited it March 11th 2020 just before the Covid 19 pandemic breakout & the shutdown of Europe. Before going there, I made an appointment & had selected a # of books & catalogues all related to photogravure & to give you an idea of what I chosen; here is the list I selected & a samples of what I looked at.

• Selected Books from St Brides Library

- **Photogravure for advanced students.** Dawson, Charles Edwin. In: Inland printer, vol. 42 (1908) CLOSED ACCESS
- **Sensitizing pigment papers for photogravure.** Burton, H. J. In: Penrose's pictorial annual, vol. 1 (1895) CLOSED ACCESS
- **Devils in photogravure.** Wilkinson, W. T. In: Penrose's pictorial annual, vol. 11 (1905-1906) CLOSED ACCESS
- **Photogravure with a screen grain.** Wilmer, H. In: Penrose's pictorial annual, vol. 5 (1899) CLOSED ACCESS
- **Photogravure with metzograph screen, high light processes, etc..** Wood, J. G. In: Penrose's pictorial annual, vol. 12 (1906-1907) CLOSED ACCESS
- **Colour photogravure.** Thevoz, Fred. In: Penrose's annual, (1926) CLOSED ACCESS
- **Photogravure reproductions of oil paintings by the Hanfstaengl process.** Hanfstaengl, F. London, 1894 Accession Number: 10853 CLOSED ACCESS BOX AL
- **Autotype photogravure pigment papers.** Notes and working instructions in English, Française, Deutsch, Espanol. Autotype Company. London, Accession Number: 28658 CLOSED ACCESS YL4
- **Colour photogravure /** Cartwright, Herbert Mills. Bournemouth, 1936 Accession Number: 27407 CLOSED ACCESS BOX DL
- **Printing photogravure in colour.** Horgan, Stephen H. In: Inland printer, vol. 42, no. 3 (Dec. 1908) CLOSED ACCESS
- **Guide for photogravure engraving /** Greaves, Wilfred. Leeds :Photogravure Supplies Ltd., 1929m Accession Number: 26417 CLOSED ACCESS BOX 254

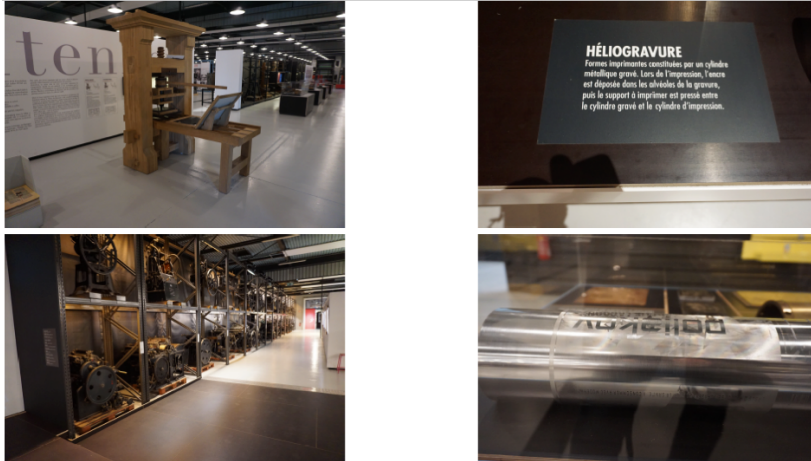
Atelier-Musée Imprimerie (AMI) at Malesherbes 2021

Researching for European print museums on the internet I came across several of them but one particular caught my eye, Atelier – Musée Imprimerie at Malesherbes. It is situated 70 kilometers outside Paris in the sleepy town with the same name.

To go out here is a day trip. It takes 1 ½ hrs out to Malesherbes with the RER train from Gare Austerlitz in Paris. From the train station it is a 15 min walk to get to the Museum which is situated outside the town. The museum takes you through the history of printing all the way from the invention of the movable type up to the digital revolution. It is an impressive sight to walk into the museum that covers 5000 m² & is filled with objects relating to the concept of the print. There is everything from a copy of Gutenberg's wooden press to the start of the digital technology, workshops for making paper & they run classes where you can learn marbling, learn how to set type the old way, binding of books & of course the main feature printing. There are several machines that have been restored and are fully operational for printing. With more than 100 machines on display it is a must see for anyone who is interested in the history of the print & its machines.



"The main entrance of the Atelier – Musée Imprimerie at Malesherbes". Photo Jan Petterson



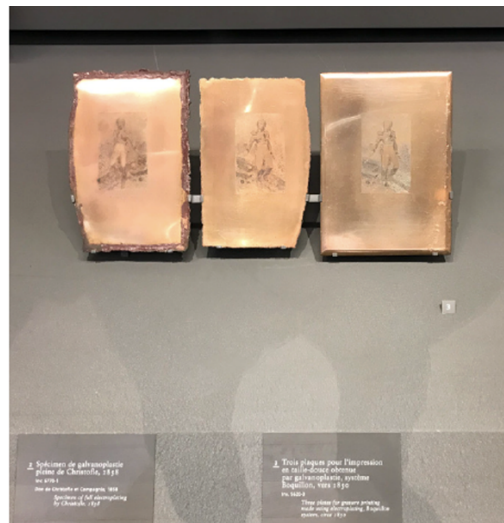
"Here you will find everything from a replica of Gutenberg's press to beautiful machines for typography, rotogravure cylinders & much much more" Photo Jan Pettersson

Musée Arts et Metiers Paris

I had been in Paris many times & had of course heard of the museum. It was not in the plan but during a rainy day in I visited there for a couple of hrs. It is a museum for the preservation of inventions & technical pioneering. Walking through the many rooms of the collection there I arrived at the room for photography, film & print and discovered that they actually had the cradle of the French development of photomechanical process there. Here are some examples.



"Photogravure proof using the Placet process, 1863 "



Three plates for gravure printing using electroplating, Bouquillon system, about 1850 Photos Jan Pettersson

Paris, the Chalcographie du Louvre 2021

The Intaglio Print Studio at Louvre has since 1797 preserved around 15.000 plates consisting of different types of engravings, from line etchings, burin engraving, aquatints, to photoetching to heliogravures. In their collection is among other things the 837 copperplate engravings of the description of Egypt that Napoleon commissioned & which were published in 10 volumes between 1809-1829. Their large collection of plates continues to grow through new acquisitions, donations & from contemporary artist who come & work there. The Print team at the Louvre Intaglio Print studio has expert knowledge & does in depth

research into different types of inks needed to match previously printed plates. Their specialty is different types of blacks, ranging from dense to warm to cool to transparent to tinted inks. This knowledge makes them able to produce these historical prints



"Preparing to print"



"Finished handcolored print"

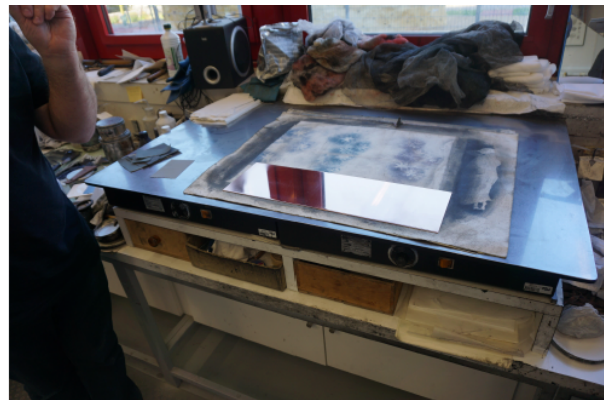
Photos Jan Petterson

In preparation for my visit I had contacted the curator team in advance and presented my research. To get there you take the RER train up to La Plaine Stade de France & after a 10 min walk, we arrived at the new location of the print studio & were greeted by the Print & Curator Team.

My visit here was focused on a discussion around the photogravure/heliogravure media how it is named and perceived in different forums of discussion as in books, on the internet & in the realm of printmaking. As well as an in-depth conversation on papers, inks, felts, oils, varnishes & wiping materials and printing of plates.



"In the Louvre Print studio"



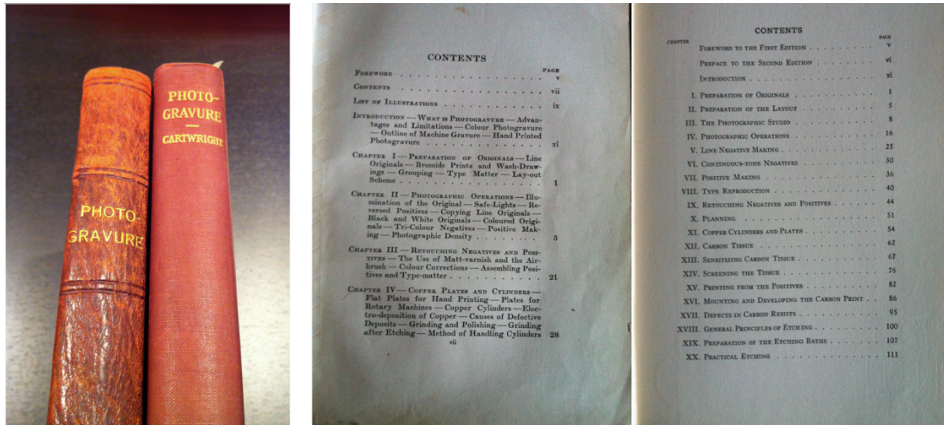
Photos Jan Petterson

Other Archives & possibilities

As I mentioned earlier with the possibilities of internet we can now also dive into & buy or retrieve books that have now been taken out from the collections of libraries, secondhand bookstores & privately owned which have now surfaced on the free market as for example on Amazon & Ebay. Especially old books used in the printing industry is of invaluable help since they with the at that time analogue approach to printing are the base that the new digital technology developed from.

For example, these books which were bought on amazon, that I consider are of great importance. Cartwrights book Photogravure published in 1930 with an updated edition in

1939 points to relevant information that can be transferred and re-worked in the contemporary setting of my research.



Photogravure A text book on the Machine and Hand -Printed Process By H.Mills Cartwright 1st & 2nd edition, 1930 & 1939. Photos Jan Pettersson

These 2 editions have been gone through thoroughly to compare the at that time the development of the process within in a 9-year time span. Were the approach of reading 2 books simultaneously to be able to compare and filter out the difference is important for the research. Just by looking at the content pages of the 2 books you can see the difference

The last archive is of course the fantastic flea markets that exists around Europe & the rest of the world were the constant recycling of history continues.

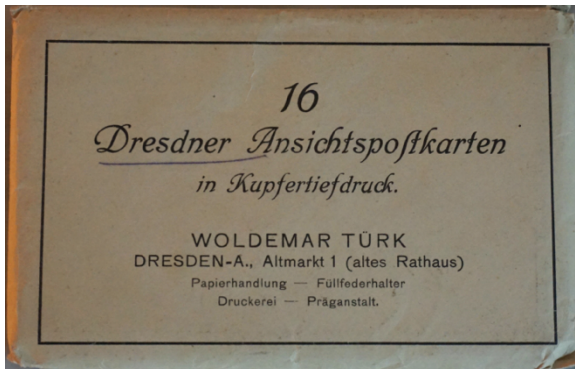
Example of findings at archives that re-cycle history i.e. flea markets



Here is an example of a relief printing plate used in typography. The photographic emulsion is still on the surface. Photo Jan Pettersson



Photogravures by Goupil & Cie to the left & George Petite to the right, Photos Jan Pettersson

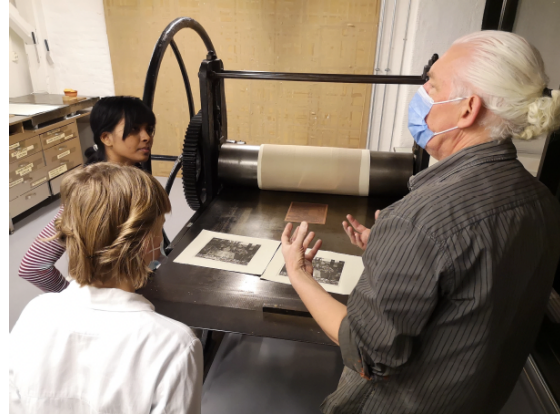


1 set of rotogravure prints printed with blue ink from around 1907, Photos Jan Pettersson

All information collected at these archives have been put into different actions, as in publications, seminars, workshops, lectures & in person discussions.

Acquired knowledge is put into workshops, publications and used in the education of students focusing on Printmaking at Department for Print at Oslo National Academy of the Arts. Here are some documentations from working with the photogravure club.





Cleaning plate after etch, then polishing, checking & printing, Photos Cathrine Liberg

Hope you enjoyed the article
Best regards
Jan Pettersson, Professor & Head of Department for Print,
Department for Art & Craft
Oslo National Academy of the Arts

E-mail: JanSPett@khio.no
<http://grafikk.khio.no>
<http://khio.no/kunstoghandverk>