

# MEZZOTINT DEMONSTRATIONS

## BY

# CAROL WAX

Author of *The Mezzotint: History and Technique*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990, 1996

Carol Wax offers workshops on mezzotint and related engraving techniques. Workshops are available in several formats, from two-hour demos to week-long intensive courses, and can also be adapted to meet the needs and interests of individual schools and artists.

**Demonstrations that can be presented in a single printmaking class** provide a solid understanding of mezzotint engraving and printing techniques. In this format, students are first shown a portfolio of historical and contemporary mezzotint engravings that illustrate the medium's versatility and give a general overview of traditional and contemporary trends in the medium.

After looking at prints, mezzotint engraving techniques are demonstrated including:

- Preparing a copper plate for a mezzotint ground
- The proper way to hold and use mezzotint rockers
- Grounding pattern formulas
- Ways to sharpen rockers
- How to transfer an image to a mezzotint ground
- Approaches to imagery: working from dark to light
- How to use scrapers to create an image
- Proper sharpening and care of scrapers
- How to use burnishers to create an image
- Other tools and materials for altering a mezzotint ground
- How to judge one's progress without proofing
- Incorporating other intaglio techniques with mezzotint
- Ways to correct mistakes
- Alternative grounding methods



Students are invited to participate and try tools throughout this part of the demonstration. A plate specially prepared in advance, containing a complete ground and image, provides space for students to take turns scraping and burnishing small images. The plate, which the school may keep as reference for future students, is then proofed.

Mezzotint plates may be printed in much the same way as etchings, drypoints, and engravings, but the unique configurations of the mezzotint plate surface require some adaptations. Printing techniques shown include:

- Preparing the plate for printing
- Ink and paper considerations for mezzotint
- How to wipe a mezzotint plate
- Selective wiping and retroussage techniques
- Press, felt/blanket and pressure concerns
- Cool tricks for adding color and enhancing tonal values that are unique to mezzotint plates

At the end of the presentation students are shown a portfolio of Progress State Proofs, mixed-media mezzotints, and mezzotints made with alternative grounds that illustrate the medium's flexibility in satisfying a wide range of artistic needs.

While demonstrations focus on mezzotint, related techniques and approaches to intaglio processes are also presented, making these presentations useful to students with varied interests in printmaking.

**For further information, contact Carol Wax at  
914-788-5329 or [waximpressions2@verizon.net](mailto:waximpressions2@verizon.net)**