Drypoint

What is a Drypoint?
Drypoint is an *intaglio* method of printmaking. A tool is used to scratch a design into the surface of the plate. This creates a *burr* along the edge of the scratched line which gives a drypoint its distinctive soft, velvety line.

Making a plate:
- Drypoint plates do not need any prior preparation. A drypoint can be made on any relatively soft surface, for example a metal plate such as zinc or copper or more recently a plastic Perspex plate.
- **Top tip:** The beauty of a Perspex plate is that it’s clear. You can place the plate over your image and trace the image through. Especially useful if creating a multi plate design.
- Draw your design into your drypoint plate using a drypoint tool to scratch into the surface of the plate.
- **Top tip:** To get a variation of lines press harder or lighter with the tool, use crosshatching to create areas of tone and deepen lines by drawing two together and shading in between.
- Start with a simple needle like a tool or *scribe*. Other tools with interesting textures can be used to achieve a variety of marks and darker tones.
- Remember that your printed image will be the reverse of what you draw.

Preparing the paper:
- Place your paper in the water bath for at least 5 minutes before printing. This time will vary according to the type of paper you are using. The better the paper, the longer the soaking time.
- When you are ready to print, remove the paper from the water and then place between two sheets of blotting paper and blot off any excess water on the surface of the paper.
- The paper needs to be damp and soft to print, not wet.
- Keep hands clean at all time at this stage.

Inking up:
- Using a card spatula spread a small amount of ink all over the plate.
- Taking a pad of scrim, push the ink into the etched areas.
- Then start to wipe the plate – wiping excess ink from the surface – use smooth strokes in one direction, turning the plates as you go.
- Finish cleaning the plate with tissue – polishing the surface gently taking care not to lift the ink out of the incised marks. Clean the beveled edges.

*For colour printing:* Apply each colour separately and wipe down in the same method as described above. Use a separate piece of scrim to rub each coloured ink into separate areas on the plate. Each colour is carefully wiped down before the next is applied. Some merging of colour will occur.

Printing:
- Lay your inked plate upright on the press bed with a sheet of newsprint underneath.
- Place your dampened paper on to the plate and a piece of newsprint on top of that.
- Smooth the blankets carefully over the plate and wind through the press bed at even speed.
- When rolled through, fold back the blankets carefully and peel of print with clean hands.