

STANLEY DONWOOD:

If You Lived Here You'd Be Home By Now

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Stanley Donwood has just launched a new exhibition of work – *If You Lived Here You'd Be Home By Now* – at the Lazarides Gallery in London's Soho. Here he talks us through how he employed a century-old engraving technique – "photogravure" – to create a series of darkly



Glass House Disaster



Salaryman

compelling etchings. As is often the case with Donwood's chosen artistic process, the technique itself can take a while to master. But, as you'll see here, it's been well worth the wait.

— So, "photogravure" – just how difficult and time-consuming is it as a method to generate a photographic print?

It's pretty time-consuming, but not really very difficult. It's quite a specialised operation, compared to making a linocut, for example. I started by getting some books from the library, reading them and figuring out what I needed; copper plate (got that from an engineering supplies shop), ferric chloride crystals (got them from an electrical components shop), and an etching press (had a friend who had one), and a few specialised things like an etching needle, etching ground (which is a mixture of wax and bitumen); ink, and a roller (got them from Cornelissen's on Great Russel Street when I was in London) and a hotplate (got from a carboot sale).

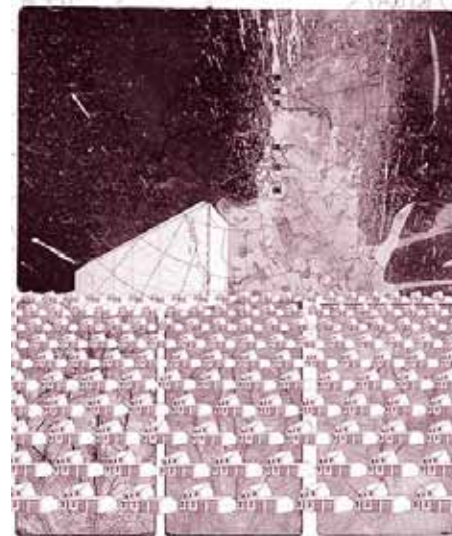
I've bored several people now with an enthusiastic and detailed account of how to make an etching. Briefly, you clean the plate, polish it with Brasso, degrease it with any toxic-smelling industrial cleaning solvent, file down the edges so the plate won't cut the paper when it goes through the press, heat it, roller ground onto it, then make a design with the etching needle. When it's done you put it in an acidic solution you make with the ferric chloride and some water, and leave it for a bit. Then you clean off the ground with meths, and ink the cleaned plate. Then you have to wipe off the ink with scrim cloth, leaving the ink in the etched areas.

That's the tricky bit; you have to get the knack.

Right. After that you get a bit of dampened paper, lay it on the plate, roller both through the press, and hope it all worked. It's pretty much the same for the photogravure plates, except you expose photographic emulsion which is on the plate with a UV lamp, rather than drawing directly with a needle.

— What got you interested in this process in the first place and why did you decide to work with it?

That's a very good question which I don't have a very good answer for. It was mostly that I wanted to try it. If I'd known how long it would

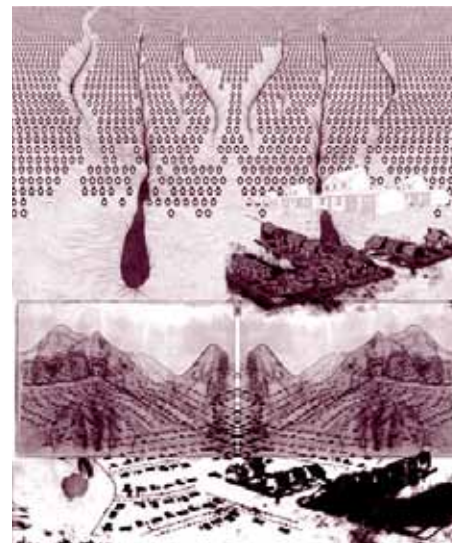


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take to make editions of 33 from ten large plates, and how expensive it would be, I doubt whether I'd have done it. I imagine the work involved in producing the photogravure work, as with the lino work for Thom Yorke's album, *The Eraser*, means the results are less "immediate" than painting straight on to a canvas.

— Do you prefer a particular method?

No, no method in particular. There's things I like about every technique I've ever used, from pencils, to computers, to paint, to various methods of printing. I hate watercolour though, but that's only because I'm terrible at it. Actually I find



Levit Crotch

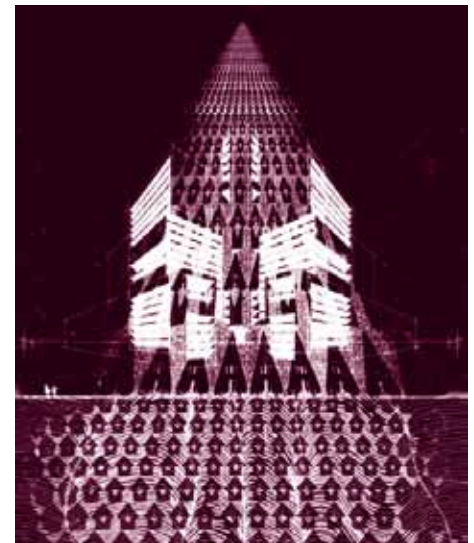


Outlet

painting quite difficult generally. I might try oils next, though.

Donwood has made 10 etchings (each in an edition of 33, 47x56 cm) and printed on 270gsm moulin de gue paper. Initial etching experiments were done with Richard Lawrence at his press in Bath. The photogravure etchings were made with James Hill at St Barnabas press in Cambridge.

The show is at Lazarides Gallery, 8 Greek Street, Soho, London until July 14th.
All enquiries to info@lazinc.com.



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