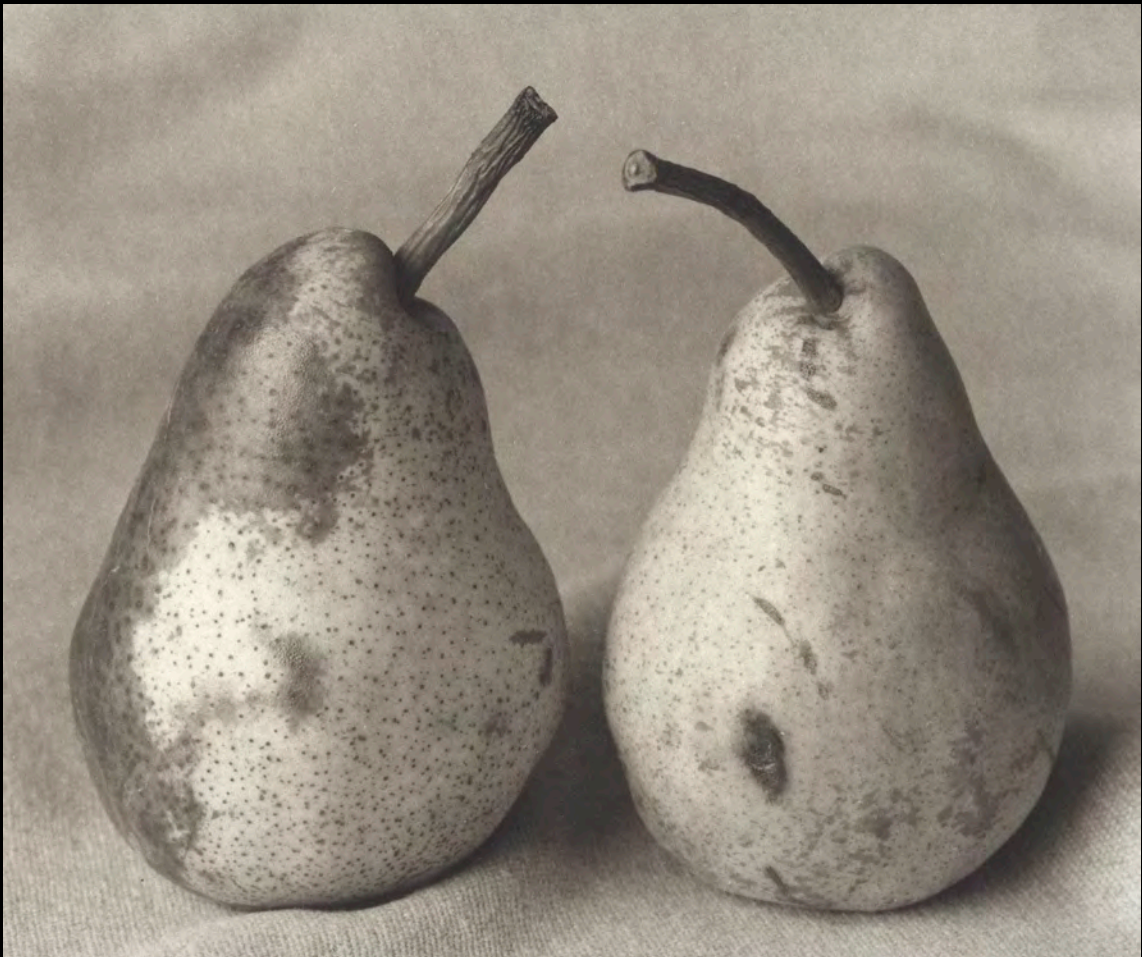


The Platinum Printing Workshop

Ian Leake



The Platinum Printing Workshop

by Ian Leake

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First edition published 2010

ISBN: 978-0-9563474-1-1

Front cover: *Two Pears* by Ian Leake

Back cover: *Honey and Ruby* by Ian Leake

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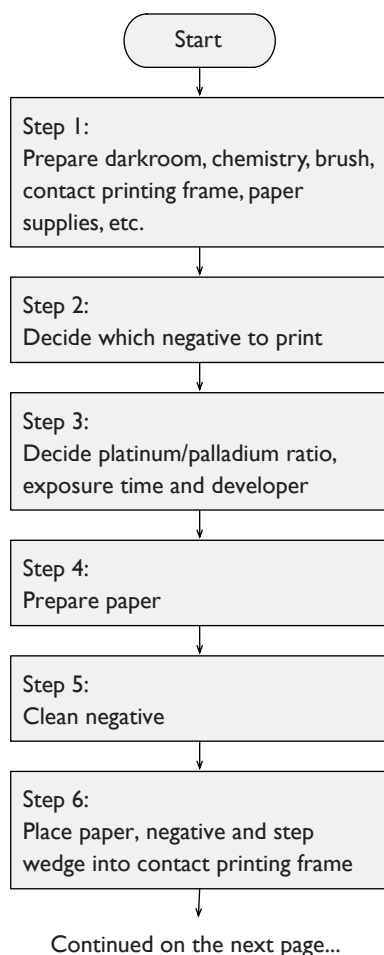
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Printing Flow Charts

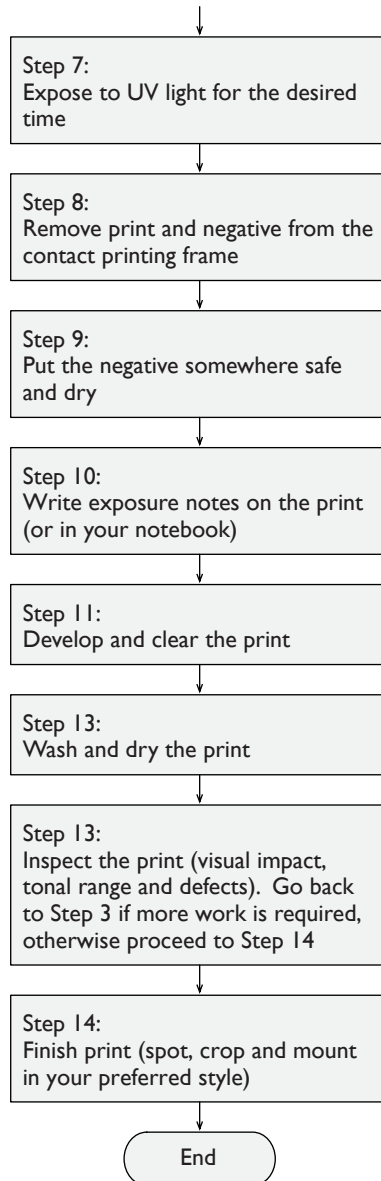
Platinum Printing from Start to Finish

This flow chart shows the entire printing process from start to finish. Further details on Steps 4 and 11 are given on the following pages.

You may find it useful to use the white space around these flow charts to record specific details of your process such as times, temperatures and chemistry.



Continued from the previous page...

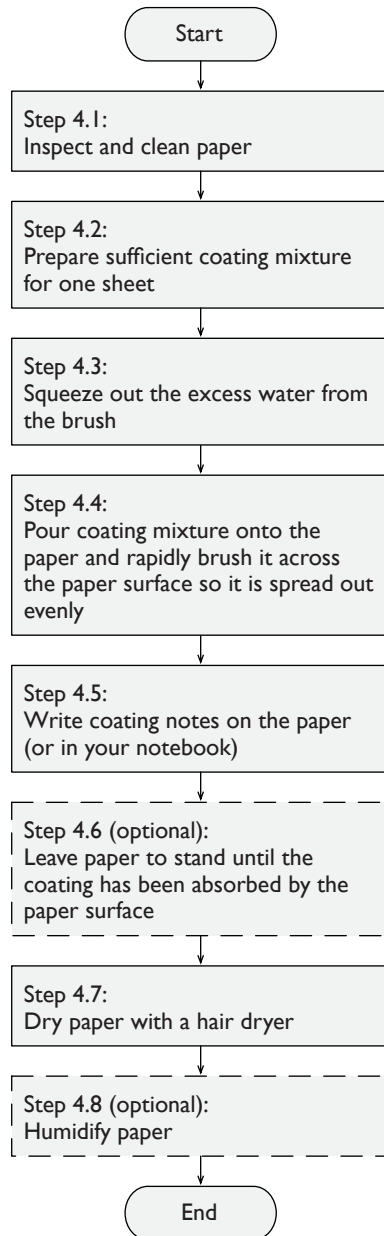


Flow charts for paper preparation (Step 4), and also developing and clearing the print (Step 11) are shown on the following pages:

- Step 4 is on page 8
- Step 11 is on page 9

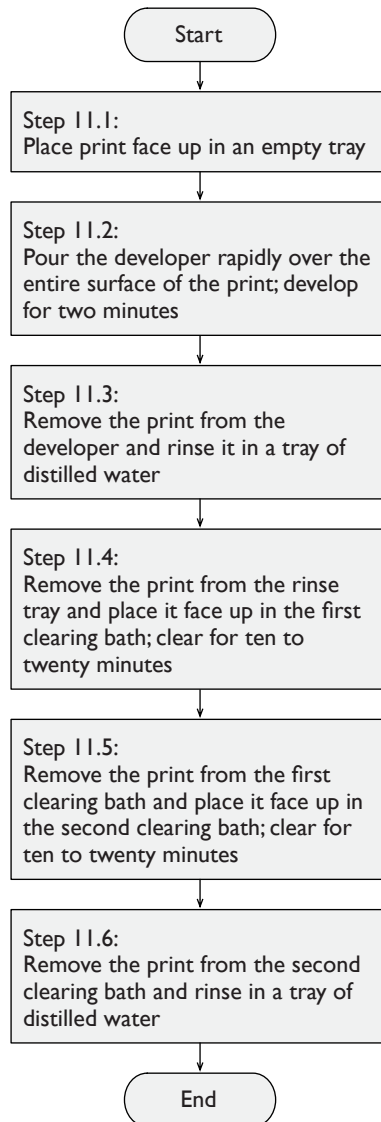
Preparing Paper

This flow chart shows the sequence of steps required to prepare a sheet of paper for printing (Step 4 in the flow chart on page 6). Optional steps have a dashed border.



Developing and Clearing a Print

Most printers develop platinum prints in much the same way, but there are many different processes for clearing prints. This flow chart shows the sequence of steps I use (Step 11 in the flow chart on page 7).



Introduction

Why Platinum?

There is nothing quite like the glow of a genuine platinum print – it is simultaneously gentle and powerful, it is subtle yet rich and luxurious, and it has a physical presence like no other print.



Figure 1. Stray Hair by Ian Leake.

Getting started with platinum printing is easy – buy a kit, paint some chemicals onto a sheet of paper, find a dense negative, apply a bit of UV, develop the print, and you are done! But learning how to make top quality prints consistently is much harder. There are, for instance, several different processes ('recipes') to choose from with very little truly authoritative information; but there are also lots of pet theories out there along with plenty of misinformation too. Finding your path to fine printing can be confusing, time consuming and expensive.

My objective with this book is to give you sufficient knowledge to get started and make some decent platinum prints. I also hope that some of you who try this fabulous process will experiment further, share your discoveries, and thereby contribute to the future of platinum as a fine art medium.

Before we go much further, I would like to define what I mean by 'platinum print'. By 'platinum print' I mean a photographic print which has an image formed from platinum or one of its close relatives. Most contemporary platinum prints replace at least some of the platinum with palladium because it is cheaper, has different tonal qualities, and works better with a wider range of modern papers.

Throughout this book I use the word 'platinum' as shorthand for 'platinum/palladium' (which is a bit of a mouthful). I will refer to 'pure platinum', 'pure palladium' or 'platinum/palladium' only when it is necessary to differentiate.

My Printing Philosophy

I am a strong advocate of keeping things simple and learning to feel the process through my fingertips. I prefer not to use test strips, densitometers or other measurement-based approaches because I find that these tend to bog me down in technical details, and leave me creatively blocked. Instead I seek to learn through experimentation and by studying each individual print to decide how to improve.

What this means is that I am going to try to minimise the 'tech-talk' in this book. Instead I am going to assume that you are happy taking what I say as a starting point, then doing your own experiments, and developing your own printing skills and style. In my opinion, the most important thing to understand if you want to try platinum printing is that you are not using factory made silver gelatin papers. You will not get black dark tones, you will get variations in contrast and tone, you will not get faultless coatings every time, and you will get occasional aberrations.

Please do not try to compare your platinum prints with your silver gelatin ones – they are very different things. If you can understand, accept, and embrace this, then you will find yourself liberated to enjoy the wonderful world of handmade prints. But if you cannot move away from the silver gelatin paradigm then you will just get frustrated.

Reference Prints

I strongly recommend buying some really good prints to use as reference prints. Good reference prints can be acquired for very reasonable prices, and will show you what is really possible and

inspire you to do better. Just make sure you buy from the best printers because there is a lot of substandard work out there too.

I have prints from Ray Bidegain, Jorge Gasteazoro, Ken Ostheimer, and several other master printers in my collection. I am always happy to recommend other printers' work if you are looking for inspiration.

Suppliers

The world of platinum printing sometimes seems to be centred on the US, which can make it quite difficult for those who live in the rest of the world to find suitable suppliers.

I have tried to suggest suppliers for all the equipment and consumables you will need, and because I am in the UK I have concentrated on UK suppliers.

If you know a good supplier for any equipment and consumables discussed in this book (especially outside the US) then please let me know so I can add them to a future edition.

Acknowledgements

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Jorge Gasteazoro for all his patience, help and advice when I was first learning this process, and also to Ray Bidegain whose beautiful prints inspired me to start this adventure.

Dick Arentz's book, *Platinum and Palladium Printing*, is an invaluable resource. I strongly recommend that you buy it and read it cover to cover. While I do not agree with everything within it, I still go back to it regularly.

Mike Ware has provided me with significant assistance with many technical, chemistry related aspects of platinum printing. And John Mullins helped to solve my 'plague spot' problems — thank you John.

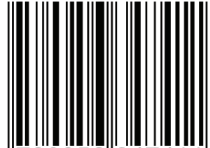
Finally, Tim Rudman helped me with content and advice for the section on caring for prints.

Any mistakes in this book are of course mine alone. If you spot mistakes then please let me know and I will endeavour to make corrections in future editions.



Published by Photo Succession Ltd
www.photosuccession.net

ISBN 978-0-9563474-1-1



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