

# CENTRAL BOOKING MAGAZINE

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A Guide to the Art of the Book... and Beyond

## Exhibition Catalog

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*2D to 3D Drypoint Monoprints  
to Mixed Media Sculptural Books*



# 2D to 3D Drypoint Monoprints to Mixed Media Sculptural Books

by Susan Rostow



Susan Rostow, *Blue Harvest*, 2014, mixed media, sculptural book, 21" x 33" (open) x 29



Incising the drypoint plate

Images of horseshoe crabs have crept in and out of my artwork for many years. How can one not fall in love with a creature that saves human lives? Their blood cells contain compounds that are used in the medical industry. However, after seeing photographs of hundreds of horseshoe crabs lined up donating their blood at a biomedical lab, I could no longer see them as merely innocent sea creatures. This macabre scene of their unwilling contribution has haunted me with images of their victimization.

Any image in mass quantities has a powerful effect on me. I am drawn to printmaking for that reason; the ability to make multiples. As in nature, though, each print I make has a unique quality, they become more a series of related images than mere duplications. My recent series, "Blue Harvest," incorporates drypoint monoprints bound together as foundations for sculptural books. The works reflect the surreal impressions I carry with me of the harvest of the horseshoe crab.

## Drypoint Printmaking

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I begin by printing a series of monoprints from drypoint plates. (Drypoint is an intaglio process, similar to etching, but without the use of acids). The image is built up by scratching lines directly into the plate with sharp pointed tools. This incising creates a burr that holds the ink that, once printed, results in a velvety dark line characteristic of the process.

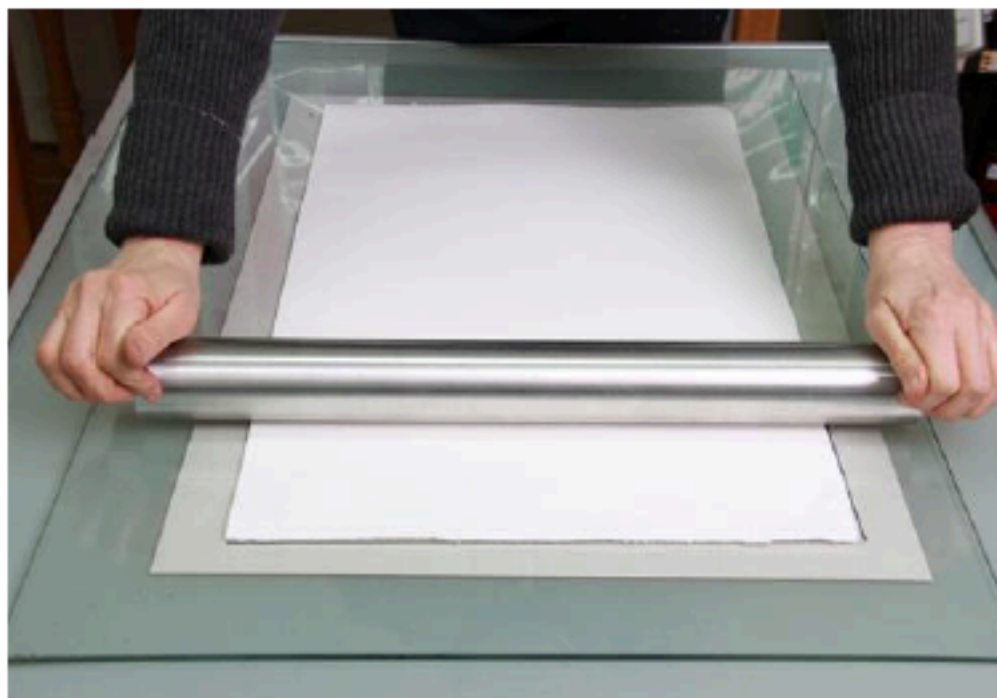
## Incising the Plate

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Akua Printmaking Plates (PETG plastic) are my preferred plates for drypoint. Their soft surface makes for easy incising, and their transparency allows for simple registration. In addition, the plates are thin, and can easily be cut with scissors, unlike the Plexiglas® alternative that is too brittle and chips when cut. For scratching into the surface of the plate, I prefer scribes and roulettes. When holding the scribe in my hand, I pay attention to the angle in which it is leaning. A 90 degree angle will create a burr on both sides of the incised line, resulting in a wider line. A 45 degree angle will push the burr to only one side of the line, creating a finer line. Dark and light lines are achieved by increasing and decreasing the amount of pressure applied.



Inking the drypoint plate



Printing with the Pin Press



Revealing the print

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### **Inking the Plate, Monoprint Style**

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Akua Intaglio™ soy-based ink is applied to the plate with a felt dauber. Akua Intaglio Inks will not dry on a non-absorbent surface, so I have all the time I need to work with the ink on the plate. The plate is wiped with Akua™ Wiping Fabric, a soft cloth with smooth texture that wipes more evenly than traditional tarlatan. During the wiping process, the incised lines are revealed while leaving some ink residue on the smooth surface of the plate. I continue by drawing into the ink residue with cotton swabs, making unique marks for each impression.

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### **Choosing Paper**

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While selecting papers, I consider how the image will print on the surface and how well it will perform in the final stages for mixed media book structures. I use heavy-weight (320 gsm) and medium weight (245 gsm) Arnhem 1618® Printmaking Paper. These sturdy papers offer both a nice surface for printing and hold up well for my mixed media materials. Japanese papers are transparent, soft and more pliable than the heavier weight western papers. They are used in the final stages as veil-like layers to bury and reveal parts of the image.

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### **Printing Drypoint Monoprints**

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The drypoint plate can be printed with an etching press or by hand with the Akua™ Pin Press. The Pin Press is a hand-held, metal rolling pin designed specifically for printmaking techniques that do not require heavy pressure, such as monotype and drypoint.

I alternate between both types of presses. Printing with less pressure slows the process of the plate-breaking down. Without the burr, the line on the print will lose its velvety appearance. Once the burr breaks off the plate, an etching press may yield a better impression.

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### **Mixed Media Sculptural Books**

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At this point, I have no preconceived plan. I start by selecting, cutting, folding and gluing prints on heavy-weight papers to form the spine of the book. Prints made on the lighter weight papers join in once the backbone is structurally sound. With the application of soil and other natural materials the prints merge together, growing into the sculptural book.