

How Prints are Made

Rembrandt created each print by drawing the image onto a hand-forged copper plate, using the techniques of etching, engraving and drypoint. He re-worked many of his plates, altering the images and compositions, removing or adding figures, or enhancing the strength of line, shadow and texture when the plate became worn. Prints pulled from the plate at these different stages are called **states**. Over the centuries many artists have copied Rembrandt's style or even made copies (**fakes**) of his prints. Since Rembrandt's death in 1669, many new prints or **restrikes** have been pulled from his surviving plates.

Copper Plate Etching

- A polished plate of copper is coated with an acid-resistant 'ground'
- An image is scratched into the ground by hand with metal tools
- The plate is soaked in an acid bath
- The acid eats into any part of the metal not protected by the ground
- The ground is removed from the plate with solvent (kerosene)
- The clean plate is rubbed with ink
- The excess ink is lightly wiped off the plate
- The plate is covered with paper and pulled through a printing press
- Under pressure, the ink transfers from the plate onto the paper
- The plate can be inked again to pull another print... or many