

# station gallery david blackwood: intaglio

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INFORMATION TO SPARK THINKING ABOUT ART



Station Gallery's intaglio press

## facts:

Seals and signet rings often use intaglio designs so that when they are stamped onto wax or other plastic substances the impression left is in relief.

A 30 inch wide press should be able to withstand a total of 20,500 kg of pressure. Talk about the pressure of being an artist!

## feature work from our Permanent Collection

David Blackwood is one of Canada's etching specialists. Born in 1941 in Wesleyville, Newfoundland, David draws his inspiration from the greatness and vitality of the human spirit, in the words of poet Desmond Walsh, "the greatness that made this place." By the age of 23, his work was already purchased by the National Gallery of Canada, and his captivating and awe-inspiring pieces have since become a part of every major public and private collection in the country – including Station Gallery. His many honours include the Order of Canada, the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, and an Academy Award nominated short titled BLACKWOOD.

*"I remember the experience vividly; in particular the mingled feelings of anticipation, excitement, and awe which the wild vastness of the place inspired in me.... Since that first visit, the Labrador Sea has been a locale I have returned to time and again in my mind and in my work"*

David Blackwood

## Process: What is Intaglio?

Intaglio is a printmaking method which involves the creation of an image by carving below the surface of the matrix. Etching is a specific intaglio method which uses acid as the means of carving the image onto a zinc or copper plate. First, the printmaker covers the plate in a waxy, acid-resistant ground. The image is made by drawing into the ground with a sharp tool called a stylus, exposing the bare metal. The prepared plate is then bathed in acid which bites into the metal, creating grooves on the plate. Once the plate is etched, the ground is removed, and the plate is ready for printing. The printmaker wipes the ink into the etched grooves, allowing the printed image to be seen. Damp paper is laid on the plate and the two are run through a printing press. The pressure of the press pulls the ink up from the grooves and onto the paper, creating the printed image.

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### feature work

Donated by the artist himself, *Passing Shadow* is one of two Blackwood pieces in Station Gallery's Permanent Collection. Inspired by his youth growing up in Newfoundland, the artist recalls the childhood friend whose shed door provides the groundwork for this image. The only painted surface in an otherwise grey and bleak gathering of buildings, the door displayed the rich colour combinations created by his friends' Uncle Ephraim. The image of Ephraim Kelloway and his "richly painted and decorated icon" remains etched – as it were – in David's memory and resulted in the print we now have today.



*Passing Shadow*  
1990, etching on paper  
81.3 cm x 50.8 cm

### curriculum questions

What is the focal point of this print?

What makes the focal point stand out for you?

Can you identify 3 different "paths" in the print? What kind of movement is there, fast, slow, energetic, tired?

### questions to analyse

If he was here, what questions would you ask the artist about his work?

How would you change this artwork?

What do you think is the most important part of this artwork?

### curriculum link

Grade 4, Principle of Design Focus : Emphasis (from The Ontario Curriculum for The Arts 2009)

Emphasis: use of colour intensity, contrast in value, placement and size of shape, and/or weight of line to create a particular focal point. A focal point is where the eye tends to center and what the viewer focuses on. A focal point can be the largest, brightest, darkest or most complex of the whole.