

CHAPTER VII

FINISHING AND MOUNTING

It is never more true than in the case of a bromoil or transfer, that it is impossible to tell the success or failure of a print until it is trimmed and mounted. This applies particularly to bromoils of the grainy type which often look very rough and unsatisfactory when unmounted, but exhibit just the desired effect of freshness and breadth when properly finished. The effect is further enhanced when the mounted print is viewed behind glass. It has previously been emphasized that during the final stages of the actual inking the work should be viewed properly masked with wide L-shaped cards and covered by a sheet of clean glass. In this way it is possible to keep the final effect in the mind's eye when actually working.

Really this point is of supreme importance, because it is almost impossible to judge the true effect of the print under exhibition conditions without some precaution of this kind. In the same connection, it is important that the light used when inking up the bromoil or judging the appearance of the transfer, should correspond in regard to strength to that which will prevail under the actual exhibition conditions. This, of course, presupposes that the print is intended for exhibition. If, on the contrary, it is to be circulated in a portfolio and viewed in the hand, no glass should be used while inking. Thus, an artificial light of moderate strength is ideal for allowing a sound judgment, and it should preferably fall over the left shoulder. In very bright daylight, near a window, the print will appear too light, while if bright daylight be used for viewing during pigmenting, the print will appear too sombre in artificial light. As a general rule, however, a print will stand appearing a shade darker than intended much more easily

than it will a shade lighter. Hence, it is good counsel to view the print during pigmenting in a moderately bright light, and not to judge with dull illumination.

Drying the Bromoil. With a transfer there is never much trouble about drying of the ink. Provided an unsuitable medium has not been used, the transfer is quite hard enough to stand the final retouching and mounting, at the latest, after 12 hours. With an untransferred bromoil, however, there seems to occur quite a considerable variation in the way in which the ink hardens up. The softer the ink which has been employed, of course, the longer it will take to dry. Also, if it has been put on very thickly in parts a longer drying period will be necessary than if it has been applied sparingly with an almost empty brush. Using ink no softer than a mixture of equal parts of Sinclair's Encre Machine and Encre Taille Douce, there should not be any difficulty in getting a bromoil sufficiently hard to stand mounting and handling after, at most, three or four days. Frequently a much shorter time will be sufficient. A rapid drying medium like Roberson's will take a shorter time than, say, linseed oil, while megilp will fall between the two in this respect. A point which is perhaps worth mentioning is that free exposure to air and light considerably accelerates the drying of oils and varnishes, and the best position for suspending a drying print will, therefore, be in a warm, well-lit room. Providing the temperature is not excessive, a linen airing cupboard can be turned to good account.

Work on the Dry Print. Both bromoils and transfers may be worked on in various ways when dry. Bromoil ink, thinned with a little medium or paraffin, may be dabbed on with the usual brushes, always remembering, of course, that it cannot be hopped off again from a dry print. Again, very little ink should be taken on the brush, because the transfer of ink to the dry paper should be effected very gradually to avoid mistakes. Before commencing any work of this kind, it is a good plan, with untransferred bromoils, to take an old handkerchief rolled into a pad and

rub it with a circular motion all over the print surface. This effects a really remarkable clearing and refining of the lighter tone passages, because of the removal of extraneous ink and dirt, forming no integral part of the image. In the case of a print inked with very soft ink this rubbing down should be done gently or omitted altogether for fear of causing damage. Conté crayon, either in stick form or in powder, is very good for working up warm black prints, both transferred and otherwise. If any differences of texture show in a bromoil print, a light steaming operation should put matters right. A light application of a hard rubber will serve to heighten any small catch lights which require emphasis, but this kind of work should not be overdone, as it is almost impossible to avoid the production of differences of texture in the surface of the print.

Protecting the Surface of Bromoils. Transfers are quite proof against abrasion, but bromoils will usually not stand any abrasion of the surface, however mild, and those made with soft ink are really very fragile. This state of affairs can be remedied, to a large extent, by applying a coat of very thin celluloid varnish, such as is now frequently used for the fixing of pastels. The ordinary charcoal fixatif is of no use for this purpose, but the correct type is manufactured, amongst others, by Lefranc, of Paris, and can be obtained from Messrs. Lechertier Barbe & Co. It is not easy to spray this type of fixatif with a mouth spray, and if such is attempted great care should be taken not to inhale the amyl acetate fumes. Alternatively, an amyl acetate solution of celluloid can be prepared and used as a substitute for the fixatif. The strength should be chosen so that while as concentrated as can well be sprayed, it should dry quite invisible, and with a dead matt surface. A few trials in diluting a concentrated varnish will show the best strength.

Mounting Bromoils and Transfers. Mounting of bromoils is best carried out with cut-out mounts. The print is stuck down on a piece of stout paper or card as a backing, and

the mount proper is stuck over the top, with a hole cut to mask off just that amount of the edges of the print which it is desired not to include. In this way, a reasonable protection from abrasion is secured. For prints which are to undergo much circulation it is a good idea to stick down the mounting paper at the top only, leaving the sides free to open up. A piece of tissue paper may then be slipped between the mounting paper and the bromoil, and additional safety is obtained. As with other types of print, light-toned mounts are most suitable, and the surface should bear some relation to the character of the bromoil. A granular print on rough paper needs a rough mount, while a smoothly finished bromoil looks better with a rather smooth mount. Good cartridge paper makes excellent material for mounting. That supplied by the average stationer is usually rather smooth, but rougher, more substantial grades may be obtained, for instance, from Messrs. Reeves, Ltd., which have a finer appearance. Alternatively, special mounting papers can be obtained from photographic dealers, and also from etching material suppliers.

The mounting of transfers may be carried out most suitably in two principal ways. Firstly a cut-out mount may be used, the transfer appearing in the aperture with a margin of clear transfer paper showing round the edges, the title and author's signature being inscribed neatly on the margin at the foot. This is the method usually adopted with etchings, aquatints, etc., and is equally suitable for transfers. In the second place a very good effect is obtained if the transfer be stuck on to the mount (of stout paper or card) by the top edges, a wide border being left all round the print, and the edges of the transfer paper being torn to imitate a deckle finish. A specially fine effect is produced if there is a slight difference of tone or tint between the transfer paper and the mount, e.g., the transfer paper a pale cream, and the mount ivory or white. With the translucent Japanese papers a considerable variation in effect is secured by alteration of the backing paper. With a white backing paper the finer high light gradations seem to get lost in the general reflection of light from the surface and from the

backing paper. With a deep buff backing a much finer effect is obtained.

Two special treatments for Bromoils. There are two methods for altering the finished appearance of bromoils (not transfers) which may be touched upon before leaving the description of technical operations.

In the first place there is the process known as defatting. Many workers object to the somewhat oily look of the surface of many bromoils, and desire something approaching more the appearance of a transfer. Such a result can be obtained by immersing the finished and *bone-hard* print in a grease solvent, which then removes the oily constituents of the ink and leaves behind an image of almost pure pigment adhering to the gelatine. Any suitable ink solvent may be used, such as benzene, petrol, or carbon tetrachloride. The latter is to be preferred, because it is non-inflammable, and leaves no greasy deposit behind. The print is gently slid under the surface of the solvent, which is contained to a depth of some quarter of an inch in a suitable dish, and, after remaining a few minutes, is gently slid out of the dish, and placed upon a level glass sheet for the solvent to evaporate. The finished print has a beautiful dead matt surface reminiscent of a gum print.

The second process, which is particularly well adapted to strong, clear-cut subjects, is described by Underberg in the treatment of the bromoil with sodium hypochlorite (*British Journal of Photography*, 1926, p. 498). It consists of the treatment of the bromoil with sodium hypochlorite solution. This is bought commercially under the name of Eau de Javelle. For use, it is diluted with ten volumes of water, or more. Probably Milton disinfectant would serve equally well, at a smaller dilution. The effect is to dissolve the gelatine away from the highlights, and partially from the middle tones. Again the final result is reminiscent of a transfer. The process should be carefully controlled and experimented with, until the best conditions are secured.

POINTS DEALT WITH IN CHAPTER VII

- (1) Mounting is best done beneath a cut-out mount.
- (2) A certain amount of after-work may be done on bromoils and transfers—with diluted inks and Conté crayon respectively.
- (3) Two special after-treatments for bromoils are discussed:
 - (a) Defatting.
 - (b) Treatment with sodium hypochlorite.