

MaryBeth Thielhelm

Solarplate Water Series

Solarplate Etching : a nontoxic alternative process to the traditional etching printing technique. The etching plate is a light sensitized steel backed polymer material which is exposed with u.v. light and developed with water. It does not use grounds, acids or solvents, freeing the artist of all the hazardous materials used in the traditional etching process.

The water solarplate etching series began with photographs I took of the ocean. The photographs were then digitally altered and transparent film positives of the images were printed and placed on light sensitive polymer plates, exposed to uv light and developed with water. After the plates were completely developed, uv light was used again to harden the newly etched polymer surfaces. Using oil based etching inks, the etched plates were inked and wiped clean, revealing all their tonal ranges and highlights and printed through a traditional etching press on wet, heavy weight, hand deckled, printmaking paper.

"Since photographs of the ocean are essentially reflections of sunlight on water, Thielhelm's use of a process that depends upon light and water to bring her oceans to life is especially harmonious."

Kimberly Whinna, "Nameless Seas", exhibition catalogue, Sears Peyton Gallery, March 2006

"Thomas Weaver, Mary Beth Thielhelm and Susan Graham show photographic works. Thielhelm's piece, "Celadon Sea," is particularly affecting. It's a photo, specifically a solar etching, of the sea's surface, reminiscent of a drawing by Vija Celmins printed in tones of celadon green."

Stephen Mueller, "Personal Statements in Just One Color" Gay City News, June 23, 2005

"This show illustrates the wide range of effects, from meticulous detail to painterly gesture, that the technique can produce. ; soft, velvety textures characterize Mary Beth Thielhelm's suite of four close-ups of choppy water."

Helen A Harrison., "The Solarplate Revolution", The New York Times, May 11, 2003