The Toning with Aquatinta Technique in the Art of Ex-libris

Prof. Mustafa Küçüköner
Necmettin Erbakan University
Faculty of Fine Arts
Department of Painting
mustkoner@hotmail.com

Abstract

Ex-libris, which is generally used as a property sign, is also used as a method of producing artistic work today. "The most valuable possession of a true intellectual is the book. As a general practice in the book, the name of the owner and the date are written on the first page or on the cover. " (Kahramankaptan, 1997, p.67)

The ex-libris both represents the belonging of the book, to whom or to which institution it belongs, as well as the promotion of the book it is in and the person made in its name. In addition to these, it is also practiced on a freelance basis today. Especially today, ex-libris is made with modern and new techniques. One of these techniques is the "C5" code and the aquatinta technique. In this study, sample works from ex-libris made using the aquatinta technique will be discussed and the relationship of intonation in painting with the aquatinta technique will be evaluated.
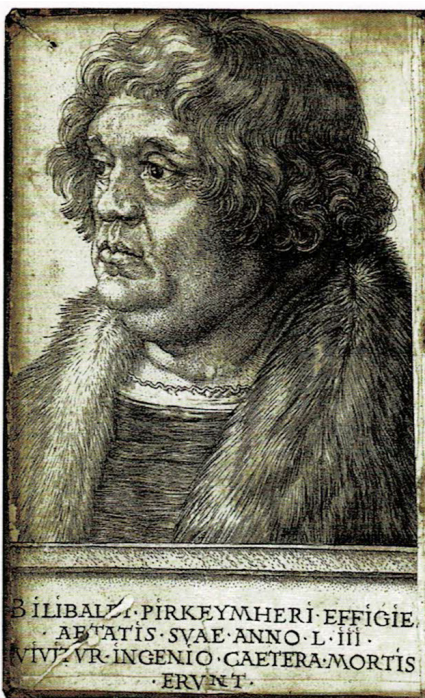
Key Words: ex-libris, aquatint, ton.

200

1. What is Ex-libris?

"Ex-libris are small-sized original works with names and pictures of different subjects on the inner cover of their books by the book lovers. It is the business card or deed of the book. The book introduces the owner, glorifies him, and warns the borrower to return the book. " (Pektaş, 2017, p. 11) "As a word, it means" from the library of…. "Or" belongs to the library of…. " (Pektaş, 2017, p.11)

Ex-libris, whose history goes back to Ancient Egypt and has examples in different civilizations from the Assyrian State to the Far East, has turned into a branch of art that meets the needs of books based on protection and recognition, with the invention of a printing press and the start of reproduction of books. In this form, the first artistic examples can be seen in Germany, where the printing press started to be used. Picture 1 shows an ex-libris of the German artist Albrecht Dürer.

Ex-libris art, which manifested itself in different types of promotion over time, was used in different ways in books that were reproduced much faster in modern techniques. With these developments, it started to move to other social areas thanks to collecting, which became popular in the 1850s. As it moved to different areas, it started to be a communication tool among the people. "Coming from Latin," written as "Ex-libris and English equivalent" Bookplate ", ex-libris is an important communication tool. (Pektaş, 2017, p.11)

At the beginning of the 20th century, artists from different disciplines also started to make ex-libris and produced works in their own style. During this century, ex-libris associations and foundations were established, especially in Europe, congresses, exchanges and competitions started, and ex-libris museums started to be opened with collecting.
Modern artistic printing techniques developed in the 20th century were also added to the printing-based printing techniques, especially gravure, serigraphy and lithography techniques began to come to the fore. While entering the 21st century, computer aided design techniques have begun to be added to these techniques, and nowadays, almost every technique and especially new searches have started to be produced.

2. Aquatinta (Dusting) Technique

While in the acid pool, non-melting resin powders are loaded onto a metal plate by airing or pouring, and then these powders melt to the metal by heat, resulting in spots on the plate. When this plate is thrown into the

Picture 1: Albrecht Dürer, ex-libris for Willibald Pirckheimer. 1524, C3, 181x100 mm.

EX·LIBRIST International Journal of Ex-libris / Vol.**7** / Part **11**
Uluslararası Ekslibris Dergisi / Cilt **7** / Bölüm **11**

ISTANBUL İstanbul
EX-LIBRIS EKSLİBRİS
SOCIETY DERNEĞİ

Picture 2: Francisco Goya, The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters, 1799, Etching and Aquatint, 218x252 mm.

acid pool and kept for a certain period of time, punctuation-type holes are formed on the surface of the plate. The type of printing obtained by giving paint to these holes and making them on paper by printing is called Aquatinta. The term aquatinta consists of the English words aqua: water and tinta: point. What can be understood from the water here is the dissolved acid liquid, and what can be understood from the point is thousands of holes in the form of dots on the surface. "Aquatint effect is for producing different tonal areas. This is accomplished by lowering a very thin tissue at different depths in a plate. The deeper the download, the darker the value. The picture is therefore created by gradually eating different tones in the mold." (Grabowski - Fick.2012, p.123)

Aquatinta technique was used for the first time in history by the Spanish painter Francisco Goya in painting. The Aquatinta technique has become a painting technique frequently used by artists over time, as well as a technique that is frequently used in ex-libris art. In Picture 2, there is a work Goya obtained by hand pollination.

Traditionally, the aquatinta technique was applied on plates with linear structuring with acid etching. Nowadays, it is also applied alone and all kinds of values of the painting can be obtained with this technique. While dusting, the number of dust grains and the amount of space on the plate should be equal. It should not be too much, not less. In the drawing in Table 1, the sparse, dense and normal distribution states of the resin powders sprinkled on the plate are seen.

202

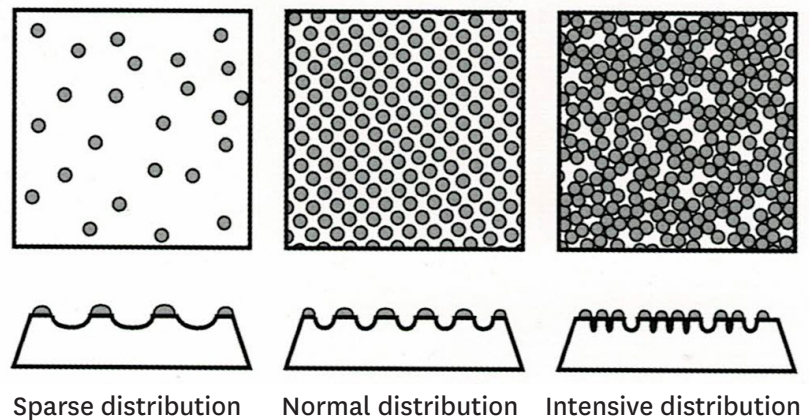Sparse distribution   Normal distribution   Intensive distribution

Table 1. Distribution Table of Resin Powders.

The plate with resin powder stuck on it can be kept in the acid bath for different periods of time. Under normal conditions, 80 degree nitric acid is taken with a scale and poured into the acid bath. Normal water is added 12 times with the same scale. Thus, the dissolved acid liquid is obtained for the aquatinta technique, which is desired to be made tones. The artist first

covers the places that he wants to remain white on the plate with lacquer. Lacquer can now be obtained by adding synthetic thinner into the chassis paint. The mold is kept in the acid bath for 30 seconds in the first stage and is removed when this time is over. In the second step, the light-toned areas that belong to the painting and the closest to white are covered with lacquer and this time is left in acid liquid for 1 minute. Then the plate is removed. The same process is repeated for 1.30 minutes in the third stage, 2.30 minutes in the fourth stage, 4 minutes in the fifth stage, 6.30 minutes in the sixth stage and 10.30 minutes in the seventh stage. In the seventh and last stage, the darkest areas in the picture are kept in acid for the maximum time and pickling process is completed.

While the durations of the pickling stages are determined, the last waiting time and the previous time are added and the next time is obtained. This type of time formation is called the golden proportional time. Table 2 below shows a schedule prepared for a standard aquatinta pickling. Picture 3 shows a print image obtained from a test plate that has been pickled according to this table.

Phases	Stage Time	Total of Stages	The Overall Total
1 stage	30 sec	30 seconds	
2 Stage	30+30 sec	1 minute	1.30 minutes
3 Stage	30 sec+1 min	1.30 minutes	3 minutes
4 stage	1 min + 1.30 min	2.30 minutes	5.30 minutes
5 stage	1.30 mins + 2.30 mins	4 minutes	9.30 minutes
6 stage	2.30 mins + 4 mins	6.30 minutes	16 minutes
7 stage	4 minutes + 6.30 minutes	10.30 minutes	26.30 minutes

Table 2. Standard 7-step pickling times table used for Aquatinta technique.

"The grand total chart at the far right of the stage table gives the total time of the last pickling job on the plate. 26.30 minutes, which is the total time at the end of the 7th stage in acid at normal values, is generally seen as a sufficient result." (Küçüköner, 2012, p.91,92) Since the last stage enters the acid bath at each stage, it is deepened each time by the acid. Thus, very dark tones of black value can be obtained.

After the acid treatment is completed, the surface of the plate is washed first with thinner and then with spirit. We now have a plate with thousands of holes at different levels. Paint is given to the plate, the parts remaining on the surface are cleaned and the mold is prepared for printing. The moistened paper is placed on it and pressed and the stained picture values in the mold are transferred to the paper. Picture 3 shows the print of a
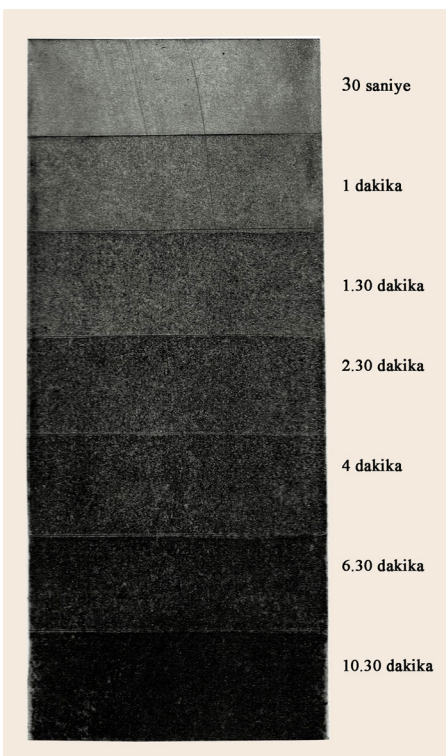
**Picture 3:** A seven-stage Aquatinta test plate printing sample.

test plate pickled according to the table above. If the artist wishes, he can prepare a test plate before etching his original plate. By working on this test plate, it is possible to predict at which setting the acidity in the water will give tons according to the order above.

3. Examples of Studies That Use Aquatinta in the Art of Ex-libris

We tried to remember the historical development process by making a short introduction about Ex-libris above. After that, we briefly talked about the definition and historical development process of Aquatinta technique. We tried to include the information that should be followed for a seven-stage study by mentioning the basic features of the Aquatinta technique. In this section, we will try to include examples of ex-libris made with the aquatinta technique or using the aquatinta technique.

Picture 4 shows an ex-libris work by the Russian artist Yury Shtapakov made with the aquatinta technique. A figure sitting cross-legged with a musical instrument in the middle of the work covers most of the area as the main subject of the painting. We can see five different tones on the arms and legs of the figure and the dress, obtained by acidification with the aquatinta technique. In the first stage, the white places are covered and protected from the effect of acid. White tone, in other words first stage pickling, is used on the guitar, dress, feet and light parts of the body of the figure.
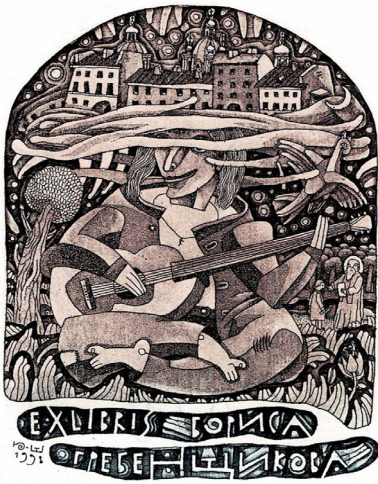
Picture 4: Yury Shtapakov, 2005, C3 + C5, 115x86 mm.

The second stage, a close-to-white tone, is used to impart bulk and volume to the guitar and body. Again, in order to give dark areas on the side board of the guitar and in some parts of the body, a third midtone was preferred. In the middle hole of the guitar, the area of the joints of the legs and the lower shadow area of the legs, the darkest tone closest to black compared to other tones is used.

In the houses in the back, 5 tons were used. The façades of the two buildings on the right and left are white. The long horizontal one is in the 2nd tone, the vertical middle one in the 3rd tone. There are 4th ton values on the roofs. Dark areas such as windows are 5th in other words the darkest shade. Thus, a sense of space, perspective and massive view are provided in the painting. The artist also made intonations in the Ex-libris article. These intonations are similar to the shape of the letters. This study is a rare example in terms of aquatinta technique dominating the painting.

Picture 5 shows a military-type ex-libris made by the Italian artist Paolo Rovegno. The soldier holding the inscription "libri et liberi (free books)" on the banner in his hand is in a state of rest with his shield down. The

Picture 5: Paolo Rovegno, Ex Libris Aldo Puerari, C3 + C5, 119x78 mm

linear structure that divides the area diagonally into four parts on the lower sloping part of the soldier's shield is structured such that the mutual areas are in equal tone with each other and the side areas are in opposite tone. In this two-tone structure, the lightest white tone and the tone closest to the darkest intersect with each other, creating an extreme dynamism and attracting the attention of the audience.

There are two tones on the body of the figure standing behind the shield and standing. The light-receiving parts of the body and the dress are white, while the remaining parts are in an intermediate tone close to white. Contour lines are obtained by "C3" ie linear style etching. The painter adhered to the tradition, albeit a little, and structured the black linear areas and dark-toned areas first with acidic carving technique. Then he applied the aquatinta technique to the mold. The left side of the soldier while looking at the painting and the area left behind is close to dark and in a single tone. Thus, thanks to the lighter tones in the figure, the figure can separate from this background and get ahead of it.

In the picture, the aquatinta technique is applied in the right background. However, the light-dark toning method here is different from the light-dark toning method applied to the figure and its surroundings. This difference has been obtained in two ways. The artist intervened in some parts while keeping the plate in acid solution. The intonation increases towards the nearest top line. In fact, this is done with a classical method we call light to dark toning. Since the plate was crushed in some places, open areas were obtained. However, the transitions in the light dark formation in the figure and shield are not melted. They are more pronounced. This clarity is also seen in the fact that the belt in the lower left area of the picture is dark in one tone and its surroundings are light in almost one tone.

In Picture 6, we can see an ex-libris work by Hasip Pektaş made in the name of Sıtkı M. Erinç. The work consists of trees and a bird's nest, which are structured vertically and whose branches are separated at certain angles. The tension of the trunks and branches caused by the vertical extension of the branches, the diagonal stretches of the tree branches relieves the vertical tension of the tree branches.

The artist first determined the main lines by pickling with the linear method, then formed the intermediate tones of the green color that will dominate the painting with the aquatinta method. Three shades are chosen in the toning process. With the light coming from the left side of the painting, the left-facing surfaces of the trees, branches and the box are left in the lightest tone. An intermediate tone has been applied to the

Picture 6: Hasip Pektaş, Ex-libris Sıtkı M. Erinç, 1996, C3 + C5 + P1, 120x70 mm.
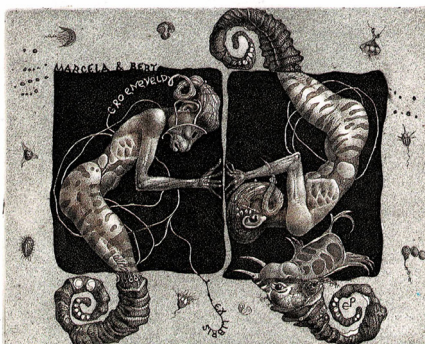
tree trunks and branches that are closest to the light but to the right, and on the upper surface of the box. On the right side of the box, the areas between the tree trunks and branches in front are given in dark tone. Thus, a very clear depth perception was created.

Above the picture, the text ex-libris text included in the picture with separate plates is also included in the picture by coloring it with the middle tone of green. The red colored bust in the form of a circle at the top contributes to the painting as a contrasting color.

In Picture 7, we see an ex-libris work by Vladimir Zuev. The study was created using two different techniques. Acid etching technique was used in the creation of the portraits at the bottom. The section, which consists of wide areas in the form of horizontal ladders at the top of the picture, was made with the aquatinta technique and occupies more space in the picture compared to the one below. The artist has worked on the Tower of Babel in painting. The name of the tower is written under the picture. We see the Tower of Babel as it tapered upwards. The artist used the aquatinta technique to distinguish between the stairs and the walls of the Tower floors where the stairs are located.

The ladder-shaped wall behind the top left of the portrait was made in the darkest tone. The wall under the same portrait is worked in a more medium tone than this dark wall. The staircase on this wall was worked with the darkest tone like the first wall at the top. While moving from top to bottom, the wall in the third row was worked a little darker than the one above, and a little lighter than the dark wall at the top. The staircase on it is made in the darkest tone. The wall, which is in the fourth row from top to bottom and has a triangular form, was again made in the darkest tone. The lower wall is also made in medium tones. The tonal differences in these walls and stairs are a result of the aquatinta technique. The artist successfully utilized the aquatinta technique to create tonal differences. Thanks to this technique, the artist created both up-down, back-front and light-medium-dark areas.

In Picture 8, we see an ex-libris made by the Belgian artist Eduard Georgiev Penkov. Although "C5" aquatinta technique is dominant in the whole painting, there are a few "C5" etchings. While creating the picture, dusting was applied to the entire surface of the mold. The painting basically consists of three plans. Background, middle background and foreground. While the mold was in the acid process, the background was left almost white, and these areas of the plate were covered with lacquer. In contrast, the artist has etched the dark area in the middle, which serves to highlight the two foremost figures, until the last stage. This dark area overlapping

Picture 7: Vladimir Zuev, Ex-libris Julia Vermes, Tower of Babel, 2000, C3 + C5, 152x123 mm.

Picture 8: Eduard Georgiev Penkov, C3+C5, 103x128 mm, 2004

EX-LIBRIST International Journal of Ex-libris / Vol.**7** / Part **11**
Uluslararası Ekslibris Dergisi / Cilt **7** / Bölüm **11**

İSTANBUL İSTANBUL
EX-LİBRİS EKSLİBRİS
SOCIETY DERNEĞİ

the lightest area at the back creates an inner picture area in the picture. In addition, it stands out from the back by being dark.

The two figures in the foreground are made in light, medium and dark tones. The degree of darkness of the darkest tonal area in the middle of the picture is absent in these figures. The darkest aquatinta tone in the figures is almost half the darkest tone in the middle area. The artist has added darker tone lines on the hair and in several places thanks to acid etching. However, the figures are generally portrayed with other tonal transitions between the lightest tone and the midtone.

In Picture 9, we can see an ex-libris made by the artist Nesli Sisli with acid carving and aquatinta techniques. The artist obtained a different pattern by cutting the plate he used in accordance with the external shapes of the figures he placed in the painting. He used "C3" acid etching technique to obtain the main lines of the figures and to create the linear and dark areas of the stone wall behind. He used the "C5" aquatinta technique to obtain the intonations in all of the figures.

The artist first made both the figures and the stones of the wall with a linear configuration on the mold. Then, in order to distinguish the tonal values of the figures and the wall, a dusting process containing two different sized particles on the plate was used during the dusting process. First, he loaded the entire mold with fine powder in the resin cabinet, then sprinkled thick dust particles on some areas of the wall. After the melting and pickling process, fine powders formed fine and tight, thick powders formed sparse and thick spots on the mold.

Picture 9: Nesli Sisli, Ex libris Muzeum w Malborku, 2013, C3 + C5, 10.5x6.5 cm.

The holding time of the thick and fine dusting on the wall in the acid was the same and the pickling process was completed with a light value close to medium tone. There are fine-grained powders in the figures. These figures, on the other hand, were made in two different tones, light and dark. The tonal value in the light shading areas was kept the same with the tonal value on the wall. In this way, closeness was provided between the figures and the wall. Thanks to the light toning, the illuminated areas in the figures were revealed. In order to make the ex-libris script and the name of the person it belongs bold, the artist worked on the linear construction phase of the pattern.

Picture 10: Mustafa Küçüköner, Ex-libris Mustafa Küçüköner, 2010, C3, C5, Diameter: 120 mm.

Picture 10 shows an ex-libris in the form of a circle made by the artist Mustafa Küçüköner in his name. The Babel Tower form in the middle is a theme the artist uses in most of his works. In the picture, the aquatinta technique is used all over the mold and the Tower and the background are

EX-LIBRIST International Journal of Ex-libris / Vol.**7** / Part **11**
Uluslararası Ekslibris Dergisi / Cilt **7** / Bölüm **11**

İSTANBUL İSTANBUL
EX-LIBRIS EKSLİBRİS
SOCIETY DERNEĞİ

Picture 11: Yusuf Emre Işık, Ex-libris Yusuf Emre Işık, 2014, C5, 125x128 mm.

separated by tonal differences. The left slopes of the tower constitute the lightest tone in the picture. As you get closer to the middle of the tower, mid tones that are close to the light tone come into play and reveal the spiral structure of the Tower. In contrast to the white toning on the left of the tower, the area behind the left is depicted in medium and dark toning. Thus, the Tower and the background are separated from each other.

There is a dark toning on the right side of the tower. The top line of the tower here is the lightest tone and has a linear structure. This light-toned linear structure not only encircles the contour, but also extends over the ascending pathway, spiraling into the Tower. Thus, the white areas create the lightest tone in the picture, allowing the Tower to be separated from the background on the right, and also constitute the light-lit parts of the Tower.

The ex-libris writing in the picture has been worked with the acid carving technique and in a narrow line. The text is in a dark tone and it is placed in the lightest tone areas in the picture to create a front pawl.

In Picture 11, we can see an ex-libris work made by Yusuf Emre Işık with the "C5" Aquatinta technique in his name. In this study, only the aquatinta technique was used, and the picture and text were revealed with aquatinta tones on the entire surface from light to dark. The artist etched this mold in 7 stages. He used the pickling steps and times listed in table 2 above.

The artist first covered the white areas of the painting with lacquer on the mold and kept it in acidic water for 30 seconds. Then he removed the mold and left the second tone closest to white in acidic water and kept for 1 minute. After doing the other steps in sequence, he cleaned the mold and started the printing process. Since it stays in acidic water for different periods, this shade difference is also evident when there is paint on the mold.

The painting has a background of light tones and a moving foreground where two circular structures are intertwined. The background stands calmly and back as the background is structured with the lightest tone close to white and white in the first two stages. In the foreground where the circles intersect, there are seven different tones from the lightest to the darkest. In some places, the lightest tone and the darkest tone are side by side, and this relationship creates extreme contrast. This contrast draws the viewer's attention to these front areas. The fact that the darkest tones are only in the foreground, not in the background, causes the image to be drawn to this area.

208

4. Conclusion

In this study, which we discussed under the title of "Intonation with Aquatinta Technique in Ex-libris Art", the art of ex-libris was briefly mentioned, then the aquatinta technique was introduced, examples of ex-libris paintings made with the aquatinta technique were given.

The fact that toning can be made in painting with the Aquatinta technique has been tried to be explained based on the sample pictures. While working with this technique, the artist can get the effects more easily, such as watercolor painting or oil painting.

By making use of this work, it is expected that the artists will benefit more from the aquatinta technique while doing ex-libris work. In addition, this study takes place in the literature as a preliminary study for the work of making colored ex-libris with the two-molded aquatinta technique, which will be included in our future studies.

Bibliography:

Grabowski, Beth. Fick, Bill. (2012). Printmaking, A Complete Guide to Materials and Processes, Translation: Simber Atay Eskier, Arif Ziya Tunç, Karakalem Publishing House, Izmir.

Kahramankaptan, Şefik. (1997). Visual Contribution to the Book Show Art Magazine, Issue: 154, P: 67, P: 67.

Küçüköner, Hava. (2012). Engraving Art History and Modern Applications. (Unpublished Master Thesis). Atatürk University, Institute of Social Sciences. Erzurum.

Pektas, Hasip. (2017). Ex-libris, Istanbul Ex-libris Association Publication, Istanbul.

Other References

Gölönü, Gündüz. (1979). Excavation Picture. Istanbul State Fine Arts Academy Publication, No: 68.

Keenan, James P. (2003). The Art of the Bookplate. Barnes & Noble Books. New York.

Okur, Gökhan (1998). Ex-libris and Communication. H.Ü. Graduate School of Social Sciences Graphics Department. Master Thesis. Ankara.

Rona, Zeynep (2003). "Ex-libris and Original Printmaking Exhibition". Turkey Art Yearbook. Istanbul.

Temel, Sema Ilgaz (1997). "Property Symbol in the Book Ex-libris". Artistic Mosaic Magazine, Istanbul.

Catalogs

Engravings and Paintings, Witness of Goya Time, (2012), Pera Museum Exhibition Catalog, Istanbul.

Erinç, Sıtkı M. (2007). Hasip Pektaş Ex-libris Catalog, Ankara.

I. International Ex-libris Competition Exhibition Catalog, (2003), Hacettepe University, Ankara Ex-libris Association, Ankara

II. International Ex-libris Competition Exhibition Catalog, (2007), Hacettepe University, Ankara Ex-libris Association, Ankara

Table Sources

Table 1. Distribution Table of Resin Powders. Source: Grabowski, Beth. Fick, Bill. (2012). Printmaking, A Complete Guide to Materials and Processes, Translation: Simber Atay Eskier, Arif Ziya Tunç, Karakalem Publishing House, Izmir , p.124.

Table 2. Standard 7-step pickling times table used for Aquatinta technique. Source: Küçüköner, Hava. (2012). Engraving Art History and Modern Applications. (Unpublished Master Thesis). Atatürk University, Institute of Social Sciences. Erzurum, p. 91.

Picture Sources

Picture 1. Albrecht Dürer, Ex-libris for Willibald Pirckheimer. Source: Pektaş, Hasip. (2017). Ex-libris, Publication of the Istanbul Ex-libris Association, Istanbul, p. 16,

Picture 2. Francisco Goya, The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters, Source: Witness of Goya Time, Engravings and Paintings, (2012), Pera Museum Exhibition Catalog, Istanbul, p.174.

Picture 3. Seven-stage Aquatinta test plate printing. Source: Mustafa Küçüköner Archive.

EX-LIBRIST International Journal of Ex-libris / Vol.**7** / Part **11**
Uluslararası Ekslibris Dergisi / Cilt **7** / Bölüm **11**

İSTANBUL İSTANBUL
EX-LIBRIS EKSLİBRİS
SOCIETY DERNEĞİ

Picture 4. Yury Shtapakov, Source: II. International Ex-libris Competition Exhibition Catalog. (2007), Ankara, p. 58.

Picture 5. Paolo Rovegno, Ex Libris Aldo Puerari, Source: http://art-exlibris. net/exlibris/25838

Picture 6. Hasip Pektaş, Ex-libris Sıtkı M. Erinç, Source: Pektaş, Hasip. (2017). Ex-libris, Istanbul Ex-libris Association Publication, Istanbul, p: 120.

Picture 7. Vladimir Zuev, Ex-libris Julia Vermes, Tower of Babel, Source: http://www.vladimirzuev.com/etchings.html

Picture 8. Eduard Georgiev Penkov, II. International Ex-libris Competition Exhibition Catalog, (2007), Hacettepe University, Ankara Ex-libris Association, Ankara, p: 100.

Picture 9. Nesli Sisli, Ex libris Muzeum w Malborku, Source: 24th International Biennial Exhibition of Modern Ex-libris Malbork Catalog, (2013), Malbork, Poland, S: 206

Picture 10. Mustafa Küçüköner, Ex-libris Mustafa Küçüköner. Source: Mustafa Küçüköner Ex-libris Collection.

Picture 11. Yusuf Emre Işık, Ex-libris Yusuf Emre Işık. Source: Mustafa Küçüköner Ex-libris Collection.

Prof. Mustafa Küçüköner
Necmettin Erbakan University
Faculty of Fine Arts
Painting Department - 05303122925
mustkoner@hotmail.com