

11/21/09 Logo Etching Workshop

Notes by Michael Kemp
Photos by Danita Reynolds



I had a great day last Saturday hosting the etching workshop – thanks to everyone who came, contributed, &/or participated. Special thanks to Wayne for bringing his electro-etch setup! Wayne also brought his big Bowie – that's one fine Bowie!

People drifted in starting around 9:00 or 9:30. I'd tidied up my work shed a little so we'd have room to mill around. We set out some food and got a propane heater fired up.

I took some flack for using an antique table saw as the base for my forge. But hey – it was rusted up tight when I moved out here. One of those

“familiarity breeds contempt” things I suppose: I've known that table saw since I was in grade school. It works great as a solid non-flammable forge table – so get off my case <grin>.

Anyway – back to the etch workshop – first I walked through putting a logo on my most recently forged Bowie blade. Here's the link to that description I put together on my process a few weeks ago: <http://elementalforge.com/EtchingArticle200911.pdf>

And that went pretty well – I got a good take on the etch mask. So a few of us went up to my yurt and used the computer to create and print out more etch mask patterns to try out...

which looked something like this:



and this:



Back at the shed, Wayne got his electrical etching system set up. When we got back he went through how that process works. He showed us how he uses a thin coat of his special wax mixture and scribes his initials in it – then etches using a saline solution and DC.



Here's a shot of Wayne's setup with a sample piece of steel that Lynn brought. The Q-tip (being soaked in the saline solution) provides one electrical contact – the other contact is clipped to the “blade”. You can see the puddle of saline solution at the end of the Q-tip. This example is where Wayne used his wax mixture as the “etch resist mask”.

Lynn really got into it and tested this process using fingernail polish and also tried my Blue Press-N-Peel masking process. That all worked!

I think the lesson here is that you can separate the masking/scribing process from the etching. If you want to scribe your initials onto the ricasso and etch that you could scribe your initials in either wax or fingernail polish – then use either Ferric Chloride (FeCl_3) or the saline solution and DC current... and if you want to work with computer images and Blue Press-N-Peel it sure looks like you can do the actual etching with either FeCl_3 or the electro-etch.

You don't want to be careless with FeCl_3 – if you drip some on an unprotected part of the blade it will make a mess. So that's the down side there. Wayne's electro-etch process is nice and localized... but Wayne is pretty adamant that you need a really clean direct current source – toy train transformers won't work – Wayne has a write-up of this process in his book “**The Wonder of Knife Making**” on page 149 under the heading Logo Etching With Salt Water... and I think he's done some experimenting and developed the process a little more since then.



So again – I had a great day – and it looked like everybody else did too!

Michael Kemp