

About the conference's theme image: "The Big Fish Bang"

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The striking image of fish eggs exploding outwards from the centre of the universe that graces the cover of this book was created by the very talented Harald Kryvi, Professor of Zoology at the University of Bergen, Norway. "The Big Fish-Bang", an image commissioned specifically for the 26th Annual Larval Fish Conference, is a print made from a copper etching.

Professor Kryvi took up copper etching as a hobby, although he studied with a graphic artist for a short time in order to acquire the technique. Etching in copper serves as an artistic expression of Harald's interest in zoology and functional morphology. Much of Professor Kryvi's art is inspired by a combination of morphology and his delightfully playful "Larsonesque" sense of humour.

The creative process for this image began with a detailed morphological study of fish embryology, and a thorough knowledge of the conference's theme. This is typical of the approach taken for all of Professor Kryvi's work – he first studies the anatomy and then waits until an image that pleases him appears in his mind. At this point, one or more (very rough) preliminary sketches are produced, from which are decided his approach (size, orientation, extent of etching for each line) to the etching. Once the etching process begins, there is no turning back – etched lines in the copper cannot be corrected, only incorporated into the image creation process.

Etchings are made in 1 mm thick non-elastic copper using an Ash England # 9 Lustra tool. A line drawing of the entire image is completed on the first pass. The copper plate is then sprayed with an under-coating and ceratin areas are then painted with a lacquer coating. The plate is then immersed in nitric acid for 20 – 40 minutes – as a result of this, areas of the surface not painted with lacquer will take on a rougher texture and appearance (and this, therefore, is part of the artist's original vision for the printed image). After acid exosure the plate is rinsed in water and washed in white spirit. The plate then undergoes a second round of etching – the deeper the etched line, the more pronounced the colour in the printed image.

Once the etching is complete, it must be coloured for printing. Professor Kryvi's creative process is unusual in that the images come to his mind without colour. It is only at the end of the etching process that he begins to contemplate colours for the image. The colours chosen are always complementary so that the transitions blend smoothly. Also unusual is Professor Kryvi's application of all colours to the plate simultaneously – in printing from copper etchings it is more common to apply colours one-at-a-time and to make a print to the paper for each colour.

Colours – usually a mix of 1-4 etching inks -- are applied to the plate by dabbing. It is the pressure of dabbing that eventually wears down the etching and limits the number of prints that can be produced from any one plate. Excess ink (approximately 90% of the amount applied) is removed by repeatedly placing (and removing) porous wrapping paper onto the plate surface. Only one

print is made from each application of ink – thus, no two prints are the same. Finally, a cotton swab is used to remove all of the ink from certain areas (in the case of "The Big Fish-Bang, the clear areas in some of the eggs).

Water-saturated etching paper ("Vangerov") – dried to a very precise level of humidity (the ink will not be satisfactorily transferred if the paper is too wet or too dry) – is used for printing. Prints are made using a small press in the basement studio of Professor Kryvi's residence. To prevent shrinking, the fresh print is pinned to a cork board until dry. It is then ready for delivery and framing.

The amount of time Professor Kryvi uses to create an image is highly variable, but depends upon the level of detail. Clearly, the creation of such images represents many hours of work: the printing process alone takes more than one hour.

To date, Professor Kryvi has produced approximately 200 images. Many of these hang in the corridors outside his office at the University of Bergen and we strongly encourage visitors to stop by and enjoy viewing his work. Signed and numbered artist's prints of these works can be obtained by contacting Professor Harald Kryvi at the University of Bergen, Institute of Zoology, Allégaten 41, N-5007 Bergen, Norway, Email: harald.kryvi@zoo.uib.no. Other works of art by Professor Kryvi can be viewed at our online gallery: www.fishlarvae.com/photos.asp?GID=29&AID=6