



42,000

The number of years humans used cow milk to paint with before anyone thought to drink it



800 billion

The number of times Americans wash their hands in a year

Etching a legacy

Bevan De Wet combines the historical and the contemporary in his art

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What sort of training have you received and how important do you think it is to seek training, in terms of learning first principles and refining technique?

After school, I started studying graphic design. I soon realised this wasn't the right path for me and I pursued fine art at Rhodes University, where I majored in printmaking. Learning theory and art history studies provides a very important framework for conceptual thinking. It's necessary to have that groundwork and an understanding of the trajectory of art through history so that you can better refine your place and thinking within it today. In terms of technique, I think many people are excellent draughtsmen and painters who are self-taught, but with photography, sculpture and printmaking, there are so many complex variables and possibilities that one needs training in the techniques. Having a firm grasp on these gives you the freedom to push limits and explore new ideas. Even though I knew early on that the graphic design world wasn't for me, the skills I learnt there (such as Photoshop) are still used regularly.

Describe the techniques you use most. How complicated are your methods, and why is each step necessary?

I became quickly aware that the nature of different printmaking techniques, which can often be quite complex, allowed for almost endless possibilities and potential outcomes. Relief techniques such as linocut are, in principle, quite straightforward – you carve light into the image. There is something quite sculptural about it, even though it ends in a 2D form. I'm trying to push the limits of the techniques and use them in more complex combinations with themselves, in terms of layering and overlapping. Etching is another world. There is a certain magic and alchemy to it. Even international printmakers are discovering new etching techniques constantly. There are a lot of steps to follow and they need to be quite considered, as slight deviations can cause very different outcomes to what you intended. Certain processes need to happen over and over again, and there is a constant push and pull to reach the final outcome. It can teach you a lot about yourself, especially how patient you are.



Galleries and other traditional means are only one way of marketing art. What do you believe are the most important other routes, and what is the most important insight you have gained in that area in your career?

With current technology and access to the globe via the internet, there is no longer a need to be bound to traditional, fixed white cube spaces. It may still be most desirable for some to display work, but in terms of international access we need to have work available on the web. Online sales portfolios, websites and social media platforms are all necessary in creating awareness of your work globally. These platforms have provided a number of opportunities for my work to physically be shown in different countries after being seen online. People are more entrepreneurial these days, and are getting together more in collectives, combining skills and creating their own exhibitions in their own spaces, often in the form of pop-up shows, which can often be in exciting and unexpected locations. The most important thing, I think, is to not confine yourself to one thing, be it medium or platform.

Text | **Bruce Dennill** Photography | **Supplied**