

Having moved last year from the UK to France with the intention of building an experimental print workshop, I found my first winter in my new home very cold. I decided I would take a learning break each winter in a warmer climate. Early the next year while browsing ResArtis for printmaking residencies I came across Alfonso's electro-etching studio.

I was immediately intrigued for a variety of reasons. I had already determined that I needed to find an alternative to traditional intaglio platemaking. I now live in an incredibly rural part of France and I didn't relish trying to procure chemicals for the process. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, I have long been fascinated by new processes and technologies and the idea of creating etching plates by electricity caught my immediate attention. I booked a two week stay immediately and then, as I was on something of a sabbatical from artmaking as I renovated my new house and studio, I didn't think too much about it until I left for Gran Canaria.

My main intent for my residency was to learn all I could about the process of making plates with electricity and to gain some experience in doing so. I wasn't really thinking I would produce much new work.

I had mentioned to Alfonso that I used a digital drawing machine for creating plates and wanted to experiment further with the process. He encouraged me to bring my AxiDraw machine with me. I didn't need much encouragement as I was already planning to create a travelling kit with the A4 machine.

When I arrived, I was pleased to find a very comfortable studio accommodation and Alfonso's large and elegantly kitted out studio. We started my stay with an overview of how the process worked and I was soon hands on with the process. I set up my drawing machine and introduced it to Alfonso. What I wasn't expecting was how resolutely experimental the whole period would turn out to be. I had encountered a mind as restless and as interrogating as mine and we were soon exchanging ideas as I experimented with the line drawing capacity of my machine and Alfonso introduced a variety of grounds and etching approaches. I discovered I was staying with an alchemist as he mixed up new concoctions and we happily tested them on copper and zinc.

As I had never introduced any other printmaker to my drawing machine, I offered to generate plates for Alfonso and, with his usual experimental verve, we were soon trying to find a process that worked for his imagery.

My weeks passed in a blur of experiments and platemaking mixed in with trips into the dramatic interior. I came home with an inspired feeling that I was embarking on a new round of creativity and a newfound desire to spread the word both on electro-etching and the use of drawing machines for platemaking.