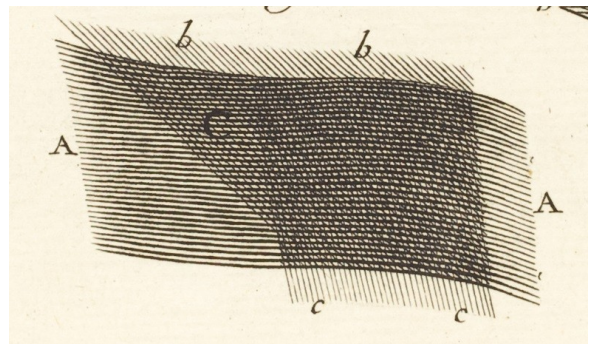


Studio Craft: Crosshatching



This engraving and other illustrations,
Antonio Baratta, late 18th c

Simple perpendicular hatching works well for creating a flat tone, especially for a static background, but for describing the rolling folds of fabric, rounded shapes of a human form, or complexity of a landscape, alternative techniques can be more effective. For a rounded, smooth form, marks can trace along the imagined surface like a topographical map. Instead of intersecting at right angles, two rows of lines can interlace without touching, or can cross at an angle.



Dense crosshatching with intersecting lines

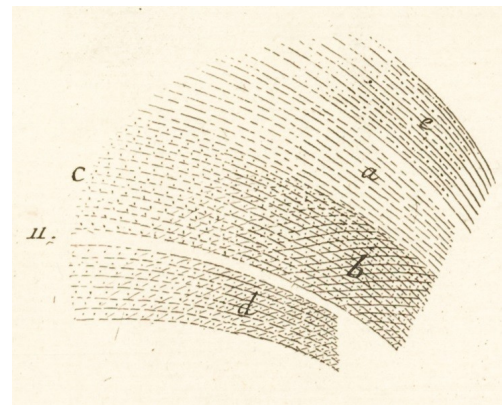
Ask the Experts: “I have always used crosshatching in my work, but I can never get quite the effect I’m looking for. I want a level of realism that so far is escaping me. What techniques can I use to get my work to the next level?”

A: Crosshatching is a way of creating halftones, gradients, and describing three-dimensional shapes, with a linear medium. Artists who do ink line work and engraving traditionally employ crosshatching to describe volumes and create fields of value.

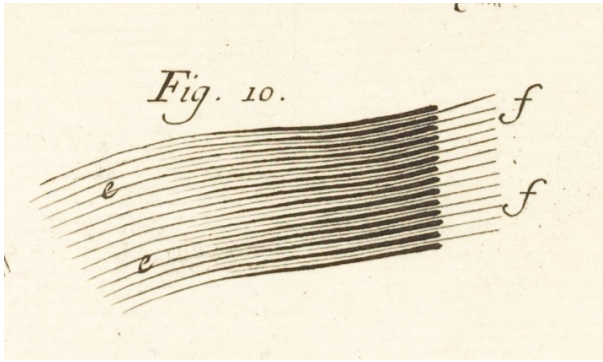
The approach to crosshatching employed by most beginning artists simply involves intersecting perpendicular lines. This, combined with outlining, is reasonably effective, but this basic technique can create sort of a “screen door” effect that falls short of the refined realism many strive to achieve.

Traditional engravers rely on a set of techniques developed to transform hard lines into suave renderings. Some of these techniques involve intersecting lines, but also include parallel, interlaced marks, dashes and dots, and combinations of multiple patterns.

Dots and broken line segments can be inserted in the spaces between hatch marks, to further refine the transition from light to dark.



Light crosshatching with parallel broken lines, dots and dashes further refining gradients



Interlaced parallel lines, one row uniform in width and the other varied from thick to thin

Technical pens and sharp fiber tipped instruments generally produce lines of a single width, but brush pens, fountain-style pens, chisel-edged markers and split nibbed dip pens can facilitate line variation from wide to thin. This variation can be used to create controlled transitions from light to dark across a contour.

Crosshatching is traditionally seen in monochromatic drawings and prints, but today drawing pens come in an enormous variety of ink colors. The same techniques that are used in black and white engraving can be employed to mix and blend different line colors with a degree of complexity impossible to achieve in historical engravings. Artists who master crosshatching techniques in black and white can progress toward full-palette drawings that seamlessly blend one color into the next without actually mixing inks. These methods can also be used in paint, pastels, and other media where crosshatching is an uncommon element, to produce impressively refined transitions between value and color.

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