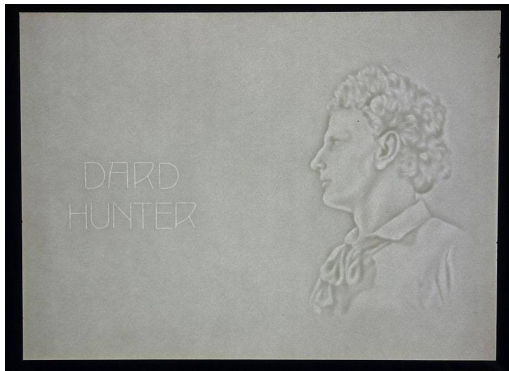
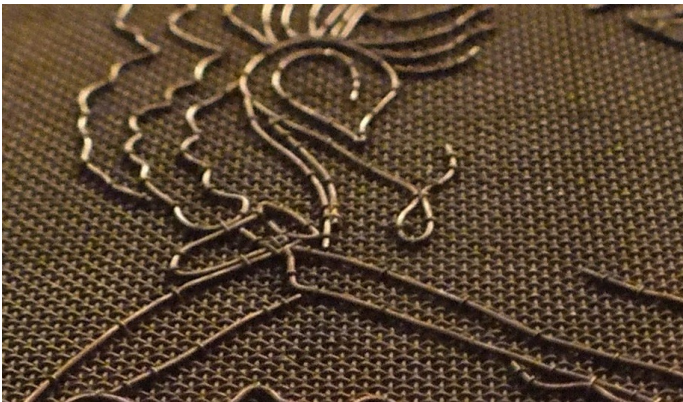


Studio Craft: Watermark Placement



Watermarked sheet, Dard Hunter

Ask the Expert: "My instructor gave me a low grade on a good drawing because I left the paper watermark in the drawing instead of trimming it off. If the watermark is so bad, why do they put it on in the first place? Also, what exactly is a watermark? Thanks!"



Wire watermark on mold and deckle

A: A watermark is a pattern of thin and thick passages in sheet paper that produces an image visible when illuminated from behind. Historically, the watermark was created by attaching wires to the mold (the screen which catches wet pulp when the paper is formed), or for more elaborate images by shaping the mold three-dimensionally. In modern, machine-made papers it's created on the dandy roll, part of the papermaking machine which imparts texture.

Watermarks, blind-embossments (stamped insignias without ink) and other embedded logos on sheet papers give information about the manufacturer, and sometimes technical data like fiber content and weight. These trade insignias also indicate a better grade of material, compared to bulk stock which is cut mechanically from huge rolls.

Whether to leave it visible is really up to the artist, and many do leave the watermark intact, either to use the entire sheet from corner to corner, or as a display of the high quality materials selected. Most agree, however, that it's important to place the mark compositionally in a way that would not interfere with imagery.



Blind embossed insignia

This may be why your teacher reduced your grade, if the manufacturer's mark appears prominently and distracts from the artwork. When using uncut, full sheet papers, the watermark will be at the margin, which is often covered by a mat or frame.