Platinum & Palladium Historical Background

1800	1873	1900	1933	1960's	2018
Pd/Pt					
Silver Gelatine					

The platinotype process was invented by William Willis (British, 1841–1923) and patented by Willis in 1873. Johann Wolfgang Doebereiner was the first to describe the photochemical reduction of platinum salts (1826). He also discovered the photochemical reduction of ferric oxalate. In 1832 John Frederick William Herschel described the photosensitivity of a water solution of platinous (II) compounds when irradiated by UV radiation.

The first successful platinotype process was developed and patented by William Willis in 1873 which described an early version of the process that evolved over time. In 1879 Willis founded the Platinotype Company in London, which was instrumental in the promotion of the platinotype process and the manufacture of a variety of platinotype supplies.

The first commercial platinotype papers were offered for sale in 1880. First were the "hot developed" papers, followed in 1892 by "cold developed" papers. In 1887 Giuseppe Pizzighelli and Arthur von Hübl developed a *print out process* variant of platinum paper where the image was developed during the exposure and no development bath necessary.

The platinotype process was widely used by professional, art, and amateur photographers from about 1888 to the beginning of World War I. During that time a number of companies started to produce and market supplies for platinum printing. In 1911 the Platinotype Company marketed many types of platinotype papers along with Eastman Kodak and Gevaert.

Willis tried to economize the process and in 1913 introduced Satista iron- silver-platinum paper. During World War I the British government declared platinum a strategic metal and forbade its use in photography. In response, Willis introduced the palladiotype process in 1916.

The period after the war was marked by the introduction of small-format photographic cameras that produced negatives too small to be used in contact printing. A wider use of enlarging processes focused more attention on silver gelatin photographic paper.

Production of commercial platinotype paper stopped in the United States in the 1930s and in Great Britain in 1941. A renaissance of alternative photographic processes, which started in the late 1960s, precipitated several attempts to reintroduce the commercial manufacture of platinum- and palladium-based photographic papers, but the production of these materials was short lived. Much more successful was the commercial production of chemicals and kits that gave photographers an opportunity to make their own platinotype or palladiotype papers.

If you wish to know more about this printing process then please join us for an Artist talk 1st December starting from 12 pm