

**MYTH:** Making real deal japanned tin Ferrotypes plates is a grossly smelly, expensive and generally messy smokestack industry. My God! Your neighbors will think you're burning piles of old tires in your back yard.

This is the trash being pumped out these days by many so called teachers and self proclaimed masters of wet-plate. As with a lot of myth making, it's based mostly on conjecture and not real life experience or true knowledge. If done properly (see the Doer's Guide to Wet-Plate manual) black japanning bright tin or thin mild steel plates to make real Ferrotypes puts out virtually no smoke and little odor. There will be some mineral spirits and paint thinner fumes but little more than that. It's about like if you decided to paint your patio deck chairs. Would your neighbors go ballistic over that? True, don't do your japanning on your dining room table or anywhere inside your house. Just like you wouldn't paint the deck chairs inside. You may have heard from one of the 'experts' that it will stink your house up. Duh!

As far as expense, it takes some initial investing in materials and tools. An oven can be something as cheap and simple as an old electric toaster oven, as long as you don't go bigger than about half plate size. Bigger plates can be baked in the oven of an old gas or electric stove. Some folks put such appliances on a dolly so they can wheel it out of their garage outside in the open. I use a stove top oven unit the Amish make. They cost about \$150 new (see source listed in the Doer's Guide). I put it on a propane fired two burner unit used for outdoor cooking.

Get yourself a good pair of tin snips, some tin cans and glass jars to mix and store the black japan in, paint brush, mineral spirits (not the odorless kind), powdered asphaltum, Canada balsam, and you're in business. Do Not get a bucket of roofer's tar asphaltum and dip plates in it and use a clam-shell backyard barbecue grill. That truly is a messy, smelly and an inconsistent road to go.

No! it isn't as easy as calling an order in to the aluminum trophy plaque plate supplier. But, in the long run it's cheaper and yields a plate far more unique and authentic with richer blacks. Unlike aluminum, ferrotypes are magnetic which can be very useful for shooting oddball sizes and shapes of plates and also

for display purposes. Picking up a real ferrotype just feels like the real deal as compared to a lightweight but thick aluminum trophy plaque plate. As artists, we are sensitive to such nuances. Aren't we?

Now for my conjecture: The reason a lot more wet-platers don't black japan their own tin is that they are just too damn lazy.