

Title:

Giclee Printing - A True Fine Art Print Process?

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Summary:

The association of giclee printing with its conceptual cousin - inkjet printing - has led some people to question the validity of this printing medium as a true fine art system. To address this, I think that it is first important to look at the history of fine art printmaking and see if giclee printing fulfil the parameters set out therein.

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Keywords:

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Article Body:

The association of giclee printing with its conceptual cousin - inkjet printing - has led some people to question the validity of this printing medium as a true fine art system. To address this, I think that it is first important to look at the history of fine art printmaking and see if giclee printing fulfil the parameters set out therein.

Fine art printmaking has traditionally been based on the concept of creating a master plate - known as the matrix - from the original and using this to reproduce a predetermined number of 'editions' of the original artwork. Historically, the matrix was then destroyed by the artist, producing a set of truly limited edition prints. The more traditional printing techniques such as etching, lithography and linocut have evolved into art forms themselves and required a huge degree of expertise to reproduce the original to the artist's precise demands.

Nowadays, the production of a printing matrix is no longer necessary as the high quality scanning techniques employed by printing companies results in a perfect facsimile of the original painting or photograph. Giclee printing offers incredibly high degrees of fidelity and richness of colour when compared to other 'traditional' printing methods and because no screen or other mechanical

device is used, there is no visible dot pattern. The expertise that is employed involves the careful monitoring of the colour system through the use of colour profiling techniques and the understanding of the colourspace that the machine operates within.

The print-on-demand nature of the printing process enables photographers and artists to maintain full control over the artistic integrity of their work which, coupled with the proven archival permanence of giclee prints (when coupled with specifically designed output media and inks) ensures that the artist's work will be enjoyed for decades. Naturally, the understanding between the artist and their customers that the edition is truly limited must be maintained. The matrix is no longer destroyed, but the original scanned file must be deleted or removed from circulation upon reaching the defined number of released editions, but this has always been the case and the advent of giclee printing has no impact on this mutual understanding.

Giclee printing is indeed a fine art printing technique and one that is truly liberating for photographers and artists wishing to share their work with the widest possible audience whilst achieving a quality that was hitherto unobtainable without huge expense.