

Topic:
Fine Art Print

Giclée Printing An art world creation or a target market?

iPRINT is produced by Business Advantage, a B2B research, business development and marketing consulting practice operating in the global IT, Digital and Telecommunications sectors.

Giclée (pronounced "zhee-clay") printing is a term used by artists and photographers to describe the process of producing [fine art prints](#) using a high quality inkjet printer from high resolution digital scans.



Giclée is the French word for 'squirt', as this is the way that the ink is applied to the paper or canvas.

At first I was somewhat confused about where to source a Giclée printer, as there were few references to the subject on printer vendor websites. I now understand that Giclée printers are in fact Inkjet Printers and that artists and photographers use the term Giclée to separate themselves from other commercial and domestic users of inkjet printers, and to highlight themselves as a specialist niche sector within the digital fine art market.

Should vendors pay more attention to artists and photographers?

Figures from The Art Business Today Best Selling Artists Readers Poll 2009 suggest the giclée market is growing as home ownership of giclée printers has gone up by 10% from last year. There are no statistics available on the use of inkjet printers for professional giclée printing.

Artists and photographers had their lifelines damaged by the introduction of digital cameras and photo printers but unfortunately for the uncreative population, natural creative flair does not automatically arrive with the purchase of a digital camera. So the need for professionals continues, but they have had to up their game to survive, as more photographers with the aid of digital technology can afford to publish their works of art at a reasonable cost and the end consumer can benefit from buying these works of art at lower prices?

Giclée printing in the eyes of the Fine Art sector

Artists use high quality inkjet printers to make high quality reproductions of their original two-dimensional artwork, photographs or computer generated art. It is also possible to design the print image completely on a computer using designer software such as Adobe PhotoShop, thus producing effects that could not be hand made in the studio using paint or ink. The digital image includes every subtlety and nuance of the original, such as colour, light, shade and brush strokes and is often indistinguishable from the original work.



Digital or Giclée printing is now the industry standard having replaced traditional lithograph and screen printing methods.

Advantages:

- Visual quality is extremely high, with images produced at 1440 dpi or more and suitable for gallery or museum display
- Prints can be printed on demand, so artists do not have to pay out large sums up front for mass production and publishers do not have to hold large stocks.
- Special software can be used to tweak and alter the original image to improve the size, colour, tone and other qualities of the image
- When printed on good quality heavyweight art paper the print should have a life expectancy comparable or better than other artwork, with a high level of lightfastness which means images will not fade for at least 75-100 years under normal display conditions

- Artists can have more control by owning their own printer rather than outsourcing the printing
- Digital images can be reproduced to almost any size and onto various media

Disadvantages:

- Costs per giclée print are high because the paper and ink are expensive, however, since the artist can print on demand, i.e. there is no minimum order size, rather than in large print runs it becomes economical. Also the traditional lithograph and screen printing methods had high initial set-up costs.
- The paper must be specially treated to accept this type of printing mechanism and ink-set and can cost £10 per sheet.



Giclée printing has had a positive impact on the art world, with many new artists and photographers coming onto the scene because they are able to print their work to a very high quality standard on demand, giving the consumer more to choose from. Artists can also print and pilot samples of their artwork in the marketplace at a reasonable cost before launching their final version.

Comments from Colin Ruffell

Colin, Master of the Fine Art Trade Guild and Chair of The Guilds Printers and Publishers Committee, is involved in setting worldwide standards for the fine art publishing industry. As a renowned artist from Brighton in England, Colin spotted the potential of giclée print making and the use of the Internet as exhibition space in the nineties and hasn't looked back since.



We asked him to comment on the giclée printing industry:
"In recent years giclée printers have got bigger pigmented inksets that offer more colours – orange, blue and red have been added to the original 7 colour choice (CMYK, light K, light M and light C).

Papers and canvasses have been improved with more choice.

The Canon range of printers are rivaling Epson who started the fine art giclée revolution, I still like my Epson Stylus Pro 9600 because it is so reliable, and it does the job. HP are growing in the market but seem to concentrate on the photography end of the fine art market."

If you'd like to visit Colin's website to view some of his giclée prints go to: www.crabfish.com



Business Advantage

Business Advantage have carried out many research projects for the Large Format printer sector.

Click on the link below to view the Case Study and Findings from a research project carried out for Hewlett Packard.

[Case Study](#)

For further information on this case study please contact:

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