



What is a Giclée?

Giclée prints are museum quality prints that offer extraordinary detail and the richest possible interpretation of an artist's original work.

The process typically starts with an original piece of art, which is either photographed or scanned directly into a computer. An extensive and specialized process of color correction, noise reduction, retouching, restoration, and detailed sharpening for print size and paper type produces a computer file that is a close digital match to the original. Special inks on large, high-resolution "ink jet" printers produce incredibly true-to-life colors without the halftone dot pattern associated with offset lithography or other commercial printing methods.

It is a technique intended for the reproduction of original works of art, fine art photography from film or digital, and digitally created art. Prints are made with a combination of archival pigmented inks and media, that include options of high-grade acid-free "rag" watercolor papers and real cotton canvases. While no printing ink can be a "perfect" color match for the dyes and pigments used in traditional paintings, giclée prints are the closest reproduction of an original work possible.

These prints should receive the same care and attention as any other valuable artwork. The most important fact to remember is that all color fades. Some original watercolors and most lithographs will fade faster than a well-made giclée print. Unlike lithographs and serigraphs, giclées have undergone extensive, third-party fade-testing. While the predicted display life depends on many variables, under typical home or office lighting, and depending on the papers used, giclées made with wide-gamut pigmented inks are estimated to last over 80 years, (up to 200!) without noticeable fade.

Giclées are recognized as fine art prints by museums all over the world, many of which choose them as their own in-house custom-made prints from the great masters' aging originals.

Terminology

The giclée printing (pronounced "ghee-clay" or "zhee-clay") is a term for the process of making fine art prints from a digital source using high-quality specialized archival ink-jet printing. The term, from the French verb gicler meaning "to squirt, to spray", originally applied to fine art prints created on Iris printers in a process invented in the early 1990s. The word "giclée" was created by Jack Duganne, a printmaker working in the field, to represent any archival, high-quality inkjet-based digital print used as fine art. The intent of that name was to distinguish commonly known industrial "Iris print" proofs from the type of fine art prints artists were producing.

History

The process was born in the early 1990's as rock musician Graham Nash and his associate Mac Holbert uncovered a new capability of the Iris printer, a \$200,000 piece of equipment back then. These early machines had been developed for digital graphic proofing, but it had not occurred to the manufacturer that its equipment would be adopted by artists as a digital method of fine art printing. In 1991, thanks to Mr. Nash's vision, the world's first digital fine art atelier opened its doors. Since this early beginning, the technology in equipment, media, inks and craftsmanship have advanced immeasurably.

Benefits and Advantages - to the Artists, and to their Clients

The benefits are numerous and varied. Versatility in subject matter and the ability to experiment give the artists added benefits that traditional offset lithography can't provide. Additionally, it is becoming widely acknowledged that giclée prints offer a richness, detail and depth that set them apart and well above traditional offset lithographs. The "resolution" has advanced so greatly in recent years that now giclee prints are considered to have higher accutence than even a traditional silver-halide photographic print (given a high-quality input image).

Giclée printing has many advantages over other printmaking methods. For example, each piece is individually produced. The artist can order prints as needed without large up-front costs and storage problems associated with offset lithography. This allows them to test market new ideas or images. Giclée printing affords artists more control of their careers by giving them the ability to start self-publishing fine art reproductions in modest quantities. Artists can build inventory slowly over time in response to the market.

Current Technology

Here at Fine Balance Imaging, we use the highest quality machines for output. In 2019, that means a fleet of Epson SureColor printers using up to 11 archival pigmented ink colors for an extremely wide color and tonal range. We have evaluated hundreds of media types and selected what we feel are some of the best archival media choices available.