

A Guide To
Creating
Fine Art Prints

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behalf of, Arts Linc.

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Introduction

What is a Fine Art Print?

A Fine Art Print is a reproduction of an original artwork. That primary artwork can be either 2D or 3D.

The artist might not even be in possession of the original artwork. That doesn't matter. The artist retains the copyright and intellectual property rights as the creator of the artwork.

Print Making, which is an art form in itself, is not covered here.

Why create Fine Art Prints?

There are two very good reasons why an artist creates Fine Art Prints. The first is that by producing and selling Fine Art Prints of original artworks the artist creates a second and potentially very lucrative income stream. The second reason is that by creating and distributing those same Fine Art Prints the artist is reaching a wider audience. In essence, every Fine Art Print can be considered to be a form of advertising for the artist. And no artist should ever turn down a chance to promote themselves and their art.

Origins of the Fine Art Print?

The Fine Art Print concept grew out of the printing revolution. Before the advent of the printing press books and images had to be laboriously copied by hand. The first methods used to reproduce images were simple woodcuts that today would be viewed as artworks in their own right. With the creation of the printing press, development of ink technologies and paper production, mankind was able to create high quality reproductions of artworks. To begin with, these recreations were hand carved into wood or metal plates. As time progressed photography was combined with lithography to create stunning reproductions. Today we have high quality digital cameras and flatbed scanners for the recording of the artwork and very high quality digital printers for the printing of the reproductions.

How much is the Art Print Market worth? I haven't found any reliable figures. But I can say that the large number of websites, shops and stalls selling Art Prints would indicate that there is still a healthy market out there for Fine Art Prints.

Copyright and IPR Issues

The whole Copyright and Intellectual Property subject is huge, confusing and a total minefield for the layman. I am not an expert BUT some of the basics are...

QUOTE

"In the United Kingdom, virtually every work created by the labour, skill and judgement of individuals and institutions is covered by copyright as long as it meets certain conditions. These pre-requisites are:

The work must be original

The work must be in a material form. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the expression of those ideas into a physical format will gain copyright

Examples of Copyrightable Works

Artistic Works Graphic works (painting, drawing, diagram, map, chart, plan, engraving, etching, lithograph, woodcut), Photographs (not part of a moving film), sculpture, collage, works of architecture (buildings and models for buildings), and artistic craftsmanship (e.g. jewellery).

The copyright is enforceable for the duration of the authors/creators life plus 70 years after death."

UNQUOTE

Basically - When you sell an artwork you do NOT sell the right to the buyer to reproduce that artwork in anyway. You, as the artist, retain copyright for that artwork. So it can potentially pay to have high quality images of all your artworks made before you sell them. You can license a third party to make reproductions, use the image in the media and for self promotion, sell the image for advertising or even "rent out" the image via agencies.

Only if you sell a client the copyright can they do anything with your artwork other than display it and admire it.

The Mechanics of Art Prints

Printing techniques

Four Colour Offset Printing, so called because it uses three primary colours and black (Cyan, Yellow, Magenta and Black hence CYMK) - Reasonable quality and cheaper for mass production than Giclée but you have to be printing hundreds or thousands of copies to make it worthwhile. You're unlikely to use this method for Fine Art Prints although it is ideal for production of Posters.

The most common method today of having Fine Art Prints produced is Giclée. Giclée is a made up word and means "to spurt, spray or squirt". The term was coined in 1991 by Jack Duganne a printmaker, to represent any ink jet based digital print used as fine art.

The technique is pretty straightforward.

Firstly, a very high quality scan or photograph of the artwork is obtained. Then the image is corrected and resized. Then it's printed. It sounds like you could do this at home. You could but the results produced by a domestic printer just wouldn't be of a high enough quality.

For a Giclée print you will want the image printed using a printer which uses fade resistant archival quality inks. Also the printer will be a professional machine working at much higher resolutions than a domestic printer. These printers have at least 7 ink tanks and are capable of producing images with very smooth gradient transitions - that's techno speak for the boundaries between different colours on the print.

Giclée isn't the cheapest form of Art Print Production but it is well suited to an artist creating a limited edition print.

Printing Medium

For a Fine Art Print you can pretty much use any available paper or fabric. The important thing is for the material to be ACID FREE. Also, for a product that has a higher quality feel I'd recommend a heavy weight paper, 250g/m² plus. Print/Giclée producers have a variety of options. Tip - make sure that when you receive your prints you use cotton gloves to handle the prints. The oils and acids in your skin will damage a print.

Preparing images of artworks for turning into prints

If the artwork is 2D then it needs to be removed from its frame, dusted to remove dust/hair etc and then either photographed or

scanned using a flatbed scanner or a camera. (If using a flatbed scanner please clean the glass surface first using a suitable lint free wipe).

3D works will have to be photographed. A note on photographing 3D work. You'll need a plain background or a background that complements the work. Try and use sunlight to light the work where ever possible, and use the best camera you can get hold of. Even if that means renting a camera. I have a point and shoot camera myself and I can tell you that the images are woeful compared to a high end digital SLR. An alternative would be a good quality film camera and to scan the print, negative or slide. Please see Appendix B for more details concerning Image Manipulation and photography.

Sizing and ratios of size

Choose a common ratio for your image. 3:2 is the standard photographic ratio or 1:1, which is another way of saying square is also a good choice. The main reason for this is that customers like to either buy the print in a frame or put the print into a frame they have bought. Frames that can handle 3:2 and 1:1 ratio images are very common and relatively inexpensive. A fine Art Print that requires a custom frame will be that much harder to sell.

Archival properties (inks and mediums)

This cannot be stressed too strongly. As mentioned previously, any prints you have produced must be on acid free paper or material and made using archival quality inks. You do not want someone coming back to you 6 months after buying a print complaining that the print has faded. Ideally you should be looking for a 25 year lifespan for a print.

Sales and Promotion

Examples of artists selling Prints

There are many artists, photographers and creatives who create work for the Fine Art Print market. Below you will find details on just a very few of them as an illustration of the marketplace.

David Work, a watercolourist, who is currently selling Fine Art Prints of his original watercolours via the upmarket magazine "The Journal". Selling framed prints (approximately 22 inches by 18 inches) for £65 + £12 p&p.

Vladimir Tretchikoff - sometimes referred to as the King of Kitsch. He's best known for his reproduction prints which sold worldwide in huge numbers. The reproductions were so popular that it has been said that Tretchikoff was second only to Picasso in popularity. Visit www.vladimirtretchikoff.com to see his work and how much the prints are being sold for today.

John Bangay - earns part of his income selling Fine Art Prints and the rights to his images. Including promotional items at Lincoln cathedral with his images on. Mr Bangay is an excellent example of an artist who seeks to squeeze the maximum value from his creative efforts. Visit www.jb-publications.co.uk to see his work and how much his prints sell for and how they are presented.

Jack Vettriano - Very successful artist who reportedly earns £500k per annum from his print and image sales. A relative latecomer to the art world, he was born 1951 yet didn't have his "breakthrough" into the art world until 1988. You can learn more about Mr Vettriano at his website, www.jackvettriano.com.

How to sell?

Fine Art Prints can be sold in galleries, shops, stalls at art fairs and over the web. In our region the major galleries are The Ropewalk, in Barton Upon Humber, and the 2021 Gallery in Scunthorpe. Both would be worth approaching with samples to see if they'd be interested in carrying your work. Alternative outlets include restaurants and gift shops.

Don't forget that you can look outside of our immediate region and consider Lincoln, Leeds, Sheffield and even further away.

On the web there are any number of sites that cater for artists selling their own work. See www.deviantart.com as just one example.

Subject matter. What sells?

Literal works are very popular. Beautiful women in erotic poses, handsome men, beautiful couples in romantic settings, cute animals, attractive landscapes, recognizable cityscapes, townscapes and historic buildings. Practically anything can sell as a Fine Art Print but you have to understand your potential market, how to access that market and what they are looking for.

Not Just Prints

Your images can be made into anything from mouse pads to t-shirts. From jigsaw puzzles to calendars. Your artwork can be emblazoned on virtually anything from greetings cards to ladies under garments. Plus, there are companies out there in the big wide world that are on the lookout for new and imaginative images to license for reproduction. Websites such as www.shutterstock.com exist to aid you in selling your artwork imagery and license it for such uses. The licensing of your artwork images for reproduction is a very lucrative market and has the advantage that you, the artist, do not have to go out trying to sell the items produced. More details can be found in the Writers and Artists' Year book - a copy of which can usually be found in the central libraries.

Limited Editions ETC

Fine Art Prints can be "enhanced" in value if they are part of a Limited Edition run. Usually in a range of 30-50 prints. Each signed and marked 1 of 50 for example. It's very important that you stick to this limited edition - I would suggest that limited edition prints be of a larger size than say smaller prints. 24 X 16 inch versus 9 X 6 inches. Also, a simple certificate of authenticity adds to the perceived value of the print and costs little to produce.

A tip here is to create the first 5 or 10 of a run of 50 and then wait before having any others printed. Saves on printing costs and stops your home being cluttered and prevents stock being damaged.

Appendix A: Suppliers

Printers

www.peak-imaging.co.uk

Based in Sheffield. Wide variety of printing sizes on archival quality Fuji Crystal paper. Also print on stretched canvas and metal papers. Website well worth a visit. Some mounting and framing services as well.

www.onevisionimaging.com

Based in Nottingham. Similar company to Peak Imaging. Very similar range of products.

www.thegicleservice.com

Found on the web via Google. The website gives details of their services and prices.

www.dpsfineart.co.uk

A Giclée printer based in Sleaford.

Framers & Suppliers of Frames

Ladythorpe Gallery Picture Framers & Frame Makers

Tel: 01302 841777| 3, High St, Hatfield, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN7 6RS

Acorn Arts Picture Framers & Frame Makers

Tel: 01302 880822| 98, High St, Dunsville, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN7 4BY

The Range Home (Have a large range of inexpensive frames and mounts) Tel: 01724 843225| Holyrood Drive, Scunthorpe, South Humberside DN15 8NN

Useful Websites

www.openoffice.org

Free Office software including a great drawing package. I use Open Office every day and love it.

www.gimp.org

Free image manipulation software.

freemind.sourceforge.net

Freemind mindmapping software. Excellent for laying out ideas and thoughts.

Appendix B: Image Resizing

Tips on Resizing an Image

- a. Always keep a copy of the full size version of your image, preferably as a .TIFF format without compression. NOT JPG.
- b. Complete all image correction before resizing the image.
- c. When resizing an image for printing make sure you find out the required printing preferences of the printing company in question. Some prefer a minimum DPI of between 250 and 300. Some require that the image be supplied in a specific colour space (either sRGB or CYMK). Follow the rules laid out and you should get a great print.
- d. Resize the image to the size of the print required. So if you're looking to have a 15 inch X 10 inch print made then resize your image to 15" X 10".

Tips on Photography

The quality of a photograph (we're talking digital cameras here) is directly related to the size of the CCD (Charge Couple Device - in effect the eye of the camera) and the quality of the lens. The Megapixel rating comes second to these two parameters. Why? It all comes down to the amount of light that the camera can process at the instant of taking a picture. A small CCD combined with a small poor quality lens means that the resulting image will also be of a poor quality. For domestic snapping there is nothing wrong with these point-and-shoot digital cameras but for the purposes of creating images for Fine Art Print reproduction they are just not up to the job.

The solutions to this issue are:

1. Buy a high end digital camera. Expensive.
2. Rent a high end digital camera. Companies like Calumet (www.calumetphoto.com) rent all manner of equipment on a daily, weekly and weekend basis.
3. Find someone with professional kit to take the pictures for you. Whether that be a friend/acquaintance or pay a professional.

Appendix C: Misc Information

Moral Rights

Moral Rights, briefly, are rights granted to the creators of copyrighted works. These Moral Rights are in addition to copyright and are not part of the normal copyright itself. Moral Rights still stand even if the work has been purchased, with or without the copyright.

Moral Rights include the following:

- The right of attribution
- The right to "publish work anonymously or pseudonymously"
- The right to the integrity of the work (bars a third party from altering, distorting or mutilating the work and detracting from the artist's relationship to the work.

Artists Resale Right (Droite de Suite)

In 2006 a new set of laws were implemented across the EU concerning the resale of artworks. In a nutshell, if an artwork sells for more than 1000 Euros, and that sale is done through a commercial outlet or organisation, then the original artist (if they are still alive or for 70 years afterward) is entitled to 4% of the sale price less 15% for administration. The artist doesn't get the money automatically but must apply for it via one of a number of different agencies. In the UK the agency is www.dacs.org.uk where you can find further details concerning the whole concept of Artists Resale Right.