

Using and understanding Editioning

For Fine Art Photographers

If you are making digital prints or prints from photographic media or digital files the perceived value of the work can be enhanced by making a *Limited Edition* of the work. As the owner of the work you are under no constraints as to how many or what size the prints may be; it's your choice so long as you declare your intentions from the beginning.

For example, if you want to make the prints very exclusive and high value you may choose to make the prints in one size and a very small edition so you might declare an edition of:

5 prints 100 cm x 75 cm, one Printer's Proof and one Artist's Proof

If you feel that there would be a large market for the prints and you are not so concerned about exclusivity, you could declare an edition of:

95 prints 50 cm x 70 cm, 5 Printer's Proofs and 5 Artist's Proofs

If you would like the edition to be much larger and appeal to a variety of clients you may choose to make different sizes, price point and even paper choices. For example:

10 prints 100 x 75 cm printed on 310 gsm 100% cotton rag paper, 10,000 dhs/ea

50 prints 50 x 75 cm printed on 310 gsm 100% cotton rag paper, 2,500 dhs/ea

Open Edition 25 x 30 cm printed on 190 gsm enhanced matte paper, 100 dhs/ea

Terminology

PP – Printer's Proof: Traditionally, the printmaker would pull test prints to check color and image quality before inviting the artist to see the final, hopefully, version of the print. Not so relevant in digital but it offers the opportunity for the artist to gift a print to the printmaker or to make additional prints outside of the edition.

AP – Artist's Proof: This terminology comes from the days when the printmaker would make a proof for the artist to see before making the edition. These proofs may not have the same quality as the rest of the edition as the artist might make adjustments to the plate or inks. The practice does not really apply to digital; although proofs are often created before the final, they are not normally kept. In the case of digital, producing one or more artist's proofs is an interesting way of offering additional prints outside the edition that the artist may sell directly and not through a gallery.

EX – Exhibition Print: Some artists like to make an exhibition print so the work can be shown in a gallery or museum without affecting the edition.

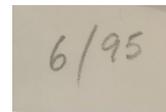
Describing the Print

Some artists and galleries use the term "Giclée Print" to describe an ink jet print (see over), however we prefer the description "Archival Pigment print on [paper name and type]" as these are the terms and format normally used by museums in the USA. It's your work, though, so if you prefer to use Giclée then please use it.

Other information

The Number

Historically, the earlier the number in the edition meant the better the quality of the print. This was because early prints were made on copper plates or wood block and each print pulled would wear the plate/block a little until it was smooth and could no longer make an impression.



With digital this is not the case: the first print should be exactly the same as the last; in fact an edition which is printed over many years (and we have editions going back 20 years) may even be better because of technology advances in printing technology. For example, prints we made in 1996 had a life of 20 years and now they exceed 200 years without fading.

On Demand vs. Offset/Lithograph/Etching/Serigraph

With traditional printing you decide how many prints you would like and then make all of the prints at one time. The cost of setting up the print is high as plates or screens must be made and normally the whole edition is pulled at one time. This makes the cost of individual prints inexpensive but means a very high up-front investment as you get all of the prints at once. Digital printmaking is a *print on demand* process, so you can print one and when it sells simply call us up and order another. While the individual cost of the print may be higher, the quality of the image and archival nature far exceeds any traditional process, and using the print on demand strategy removes the risks of printing a large number of prints that may not sell.

Giclée Prints

When we first started printmaking back in 1996 we used an IRIS printer which was a half million Dirham printer designed for pre-press proofing. Other pioneers were not happy that the prints were called inkjet prints, arguing that, silk screeners, for example, call their art prints Serigraphs so why not have a special term for IRIS Prints?

So back in the mid 90's the term Giclée was invented to describe prints made on the IRIS printer using archival inks and papers. The printer manufacturer and members of the International Fine Art Printers Association adopted the phrase. National and international advertising campaigns touted the benefit of Giclée prints. Somewhere in the late 90's an inkjet manufacturer jumped on the bandwagon and released an inferior and much less expensive printer called the GicléeMaster. IRIS promptly sued them but lost the case as no-one had ever registered the name. And thus it became pretty meaningless.

More questions?

Contact Rick De Coyte at the e-mail or number below