

Fine Art and the “Green Scene”. A quick overview by Mark J. Harlow

I would like to define the term “Fine Art” (which is widely used but often misunderstood) and offer some insight into what goes on “behind the scenes” during the three main reproduction processes and their environmental impact. I am talking about printed media only, whether it is a reproduction of a painting, drawing or photograph.



1) A majority of what we refer to as “Fine Art” may pertain to the conventional lithographs or art prints found in most art galleries. Approximately 90% of the prints you see in many art galleries are traditional lithographs.

2) Another method for producing a “Fine Art” piece would be the photo process, which is a dye-sublimation process (usually for photo enlargements).

S 3) The best method is the more expensive Giclee’ print or canvas process we use.

The hidden truths:

1) On the quality scale, lithographs/art prints rank at the bottom. They are very sensitive to light and fading. A U.V. lined glass should be used on any lithograph. They come with no warranties and have little if any archival ratings. They are also the most cost effective to produce.

2) The photo process (paper photo print/enlargement) ranks higher on the quality scale. They may have an archival expectation of 7-20 years depending on their display environment. There are specialty photo papers available to rival some of the Giclee’ prints though.

3) The Giclee’ print method is truly a Fine Art finished product. They are printed (on the average) at four times the resolution. Our Giclee’s are printed at 1,440 D.P.I. vs. 300 D.P.I. for a conventional lithograph. D.P.I. refers to the Dots Per Inch.

We also print in a wider, more dynamic visual color range that is not achievable by 4-color process print.

The environmental impacts:

1) Lithography is the least efficient method with the most waste. When doing a reproduction, it may take 500-1,200 sheets just to get to final acceptable color. Granted, most printers are using soy based inks and paper with some “post consumer recycled” fiber content. Regardless, the unacceptable make ready sheets need to be de-inked before recycling, which requires chemicals and energy to do so. There are emission and chemical issues from the actual printing process.

2) Photo printing (photo print/enlargement) has far less waste, but *it is* a chemical process with emission concerns.

3) Giclee’ printing has the *lowest environmental impact*. There are no chemicals or emissions. In fact the E.P.A. inspector we had was pleasantly surprised at the our set up!

At Shingobee Studios we are 98% efficient on our printing. There are no “make ready” sheets needed. Our system is calibrated and monitored so closely, that the only sheets not used for sale are our small calibration strips, which are recycled anyway.

Not only can you feel good that you are purchasing a TRUE Fine Art reproduction, but that Shingobee Studios is doing their part to have a minimal impact on the environment.

Mark has spent over two decades in the commercial printing industry producing reproductions for other customers.

Note: In the time it takes us to print one 30” x 19” print or canvas, you could print 4,000 lithographs!

It takes us 2-Full Days to produce one paper print and 6-Full Days to produce one canvas. We hope you now understand why our products cost what they do. All of our products feature a LIFETIME WARRANTY.