



## **How Much Profit Can You Make Printing Giclee?**

How Much should you Charge the Client?



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How much profit you can make printing giclee naturally depends on how much you can charge compared with your capital expenses getting started and your operating costs.

How much you can charge depends on what country you are in, and what part of that country. It also depends on whether your clients are starving artists or big-name artists.

I started off to make a chart, but quickly found that almost no giclee production company actually listed all their costs.

Any company that uses an Iris printer has to charge for the entire Iris sheet. You have to pay for one sheet since that's what the printer prints on. You can have one, two, four individual giclee prints nested on that one sheet.

With an Epson printer, you tend just to pay for the size of one print; whatever size it is that you want. So it's hard to compare costs for prints made with an Iris with costs for prints made with an Epson.

Scanning	Digital Capture	Proofs	Printing	Priced as Bundle	Curation	Top Coating	Packing Shipping
Drum \$150		3 proofs included with drum scan; extra \$25 each	\$100 to \$155, drum sized sheet 35"x47"		Trimming \$5	\$15	
\$25-45	\$99 to \$150			\$249			
			18"x24" = \$375				
\$50	\$100 to \$300		\$190 for an Iris sheet		\$5 to \$10		
\$25 at 2400 dpi							
\$19-29	\$75		\$60 18"x20"				

### **Prepress, often the same as "set-up fee"**

One clever print shop charges between \$150 and \$250 for "prepress". In this they include "Color correction, signature removal, sizing, dust removal, and image/transparency manipulation. Another calls this "master file creation" and charges \$50

Frankly if they do the original capture directly from the painting there should be no need for prepress correction: a professional digital capture should be close to perfect out of the BetterLight or Cruse system.

Photoshop editing can be charged at between \$60 and \$100 per hour. Since you are obviously not paying your Photoshop editor that much an hour (unless you live in New York City or Silicon Valley area of California), your editing can be a profit center.

One place charged a \$50 set up fee. It was confusing what was involved; perhaps he meant proofing.

On occasion the set-up fee is bundled with the digital capture. One place charges \$200 for a digital capture (not stipulated what system is used) that included color correction, three proofs, in-house archiving.

## Scanning

A scan with a Nikon CoolScan can be as low as \$30 and includes burning a CD. A drum scan can be \$150. The price of drum scanning in the 1990's was based on total file size: the more dpi you wanted, the more the scan cost.

## Digital Capture

The pricing of digital capture depends on whether you use a 35mm camera, medium format, large format, and how accurate your alignment is. I have seen prices as low as "\$36-\$90" for a Cruse capture. Florida tends to have low prices: \$75 for either a direct digital capture or drum scan. But some drum scanners are better than others. Aztek is at the low end for drum scanners. And, if you have minimum-wage employees you can charge less, but a discerning client will not want to stay with your company long.



Ten years ago the price varied depending on how much dpi you asked for. Nowadays the bare minimum is the dpi that the inkjet printer requires. But generally the cost today tends to depend on the size of the original painting.

Giclee places with good equipment tend to tell you they use a BetterLight or Cruse. Giclee print shops with lesser equipment don't tend to mention or show what they use to capture the original painting.

Some print shops do not offer any form of capture or even scanning: they just print what you give them. If you are in a large city, you can perhaps get away with this.

## Burning a CD

Burning a CD can cost as much as \$25 (a bit much..., but you should charge at least \$10). Other places charge \$15. Many print shops don't charge anything for burning a CD. That is not a good idea (except for the client).

## Proofing

Proofing is either bundled in with printing, or with image capture (in which case there is no separate charge), or is priced at between \$15 and \$25 a proof. Often you get x-number of proofs bundled with capture or printing, and then an extra charge if you need more proofs.

A picky artist can keep demanding a new proof, so you have to limit the number of proofs that you provide with your original image capture. Then price each extra proof at XY-dollars. That way the demanding artist can ask for as many prints as they want.

## Printing

Prices for printing are variable, from 20 cents a square inch up and down. Canvas typically costs 10% more than watercolor paper.

I use 18 x 24 as an average size. Prices not only vary tremendously, but many giclee ateliers include proofs; other charge separately for proofs. \$163 is a sample price that includes proofs. \$100 is another list price, albeit rather high (Epson on canvas). In Florida the going rate can be as low as \$42.

If you can get \$100 you are doing good.

## Curating

It would be embarrassing to charge for curating, since all this really means is that a minimum wage employee checks to make sure there are no defects that are so glaring that even the client will notice them. Of course curating is often done by the master printer, but I found one delightful website that clearly and blissfully revealed the master was nowhere around.

## Deckled edges

\$3 per print to \$10 per print.

## Adding brush strokes

Most places don't offer a fixed price for a brush stroke finish. You have to call...

## Stretching the Canvas

\$30; you can charge extra for a "gallery wrap." Some places charge as little as \$4 for stretching; \$4.50 for a museum wrap.

## Top-coating

Top-coating can be 3 cents a square foot, but I would set a \$12 minimum. And this is only if they are having all your other services, since you will not make much money out of top-coating alone.

## Archiving

\$10 to archive a file. Here is the liability if the hard drive crashes. Plus, if you scare away your client with an archive fee, he/she can use your scan to be printed elsewhere. If you archive free (and charge for burning a CD) they are more likely to let you keep the file and thus have you re-do the prints.



## Packing and shipping

For reasons I don't understand I don't see too many charges for packing. Yet it takes longer to pack a giclee print than it does to deckle its edges or top-coat it.

## What counts is the total income per print

You will make your profit on the total amount your client pays you for the final invoice. Where you lose money is neglecting to charge for each step in the workflow.

You will lose customers if you tell them the total price up front. Instead inform them clearly of each step, why it takes a master to accomplish each step adequately and given them an option to skip some expensive steps if



they wish to (but warn them of the downsides). Price the job in steps (tasks), explaining the value in each task.

### Turnaround time

One giclee print shop proudly advertised “it takes about three weeks to get an image started in Giclee.”

What a way to get customers not to even ask what they cost: three weeks? That is forever. And why tell customers that this only gets the giclee started! How long does it take to get a giclee finished if it takes weeks even to get one started.



I would not tend to offer same-day service. It reduces the giclee process to that of a cheap copier, like a Canon or Xerox copier at Kinkos.

### Comments on misleading advertising

Most giclee printing companies are honest but it was hard not to notice one place that called the inks used on an Iris printer as “archival.” An Iris printer has to use dye inks because you can’t get pigmented ink pigments through the continuous inkjet system. No dye ink is archival, not even the best dye inks of today. Long-lasting, yes: ColorSpan dye inks (based on Ilford Archiva inks), and HP Vivera dye inks, are long-lasting. But I would not call any one of them archival. But then again, as an archaeologist and art historian, my concept of archival is in many centuries.

Iris prints are not archival, and they do noticeably fade.

### Comments

Some print shops are photo studios or sign shops, and do giclee printing on the site. [www.AtomPrints.com](http://www.AtomPrints.com) would be such a place. Their print masters can be quite qualified and have years of experience.

But a giclee atelier does only giclee prints. No signs; no banners with solvent ink on vinyl, no posters. Though as an exception, an increasing number of giclee print shops are switching to printing with solvent inks. We do not accept any solvent printer for giclee or fine art photography; only for décor.

If you are a sign shop, and a sign franchise, yes, of course you can offer to print giclee. You need an Epson, Roland, Mimaki, Mutoh, or HP Designjet 5000 or 5500 printer, color management experience, and patience dealing with artists (who expect, and often demand, to see their out-of-gamut oil colors reproduced with inkjet inks).

But if you are a sign shop, be sure to posture your giclee prints in a manner that fits into the world of giclee and fine art. A hokey website is the first give away that you are not really a giclee atelier.



## Where you can see how other people charge for their services

Some pages are htm; others are html. If “htm” does not work, add an “l” at the end. Both are valid internet page endings.

There are hundreds of other good print shops, but with a Search Engine it is hit or miss whether one or another shows up, or not.

[www.allpconline.com/pricing.htm](http://www.allpconline.com/pricing.htm)

[www.artandadvertising.com/giclee-art-prints.html](http://www.artandadvertising.com/giclee-art-prints.html)

[www.bairarteditions.com/pricing/fineart-watercolor-prints.html](http://www.bairarteditions.com/pricing/fineart-watercolor-prints.html)

[www.bluewatereditions.com/about\\_giclee/faq.html](http://www.bluewatereditions.com/about_giclee/faq.html)

[www.clarioncreative.com/fine-art-printing.html](http://www.clarioncreative.com/fine-art-printing.html)

[www.chromatics.com/Serv-Giclee.htm](http://www.chromatics.com/Serv-Giclee.htm)

[www.cypherdigital.co.uk/new05/giclee\\_prices.htm](http://www.cypherdigital.co.uk/new05/giclee_prices.htm)

[www.drcpublishing.com/pricing.html](http://www.drcpublishing.com/pricing.html)

[www.gicleeart.com](http://www.gicleeart.com)

[www.giclee-printing.dowitstudio.com/Prices.htm](http://www.giclee-printing.dowitstudio.com/Prices.htm)

[www.huntereditions.com/html/gicleeprocess.html](http://www.huntereditions.com/html/gicleeprocess.html)

[http://newerapublishing.com/Company/PricingOptions.asp](http://http://newerapublishing.com/Company/PricingOptions.asp)

[www.pearl-publishing.com/pricesheet.pdf](http://www.pearl-publishing.com/pricesheet.pdf)

[www.photoartscape.com/templates/pricing/html](http://www.photoartscape.com/templates/pricing/html)

[www.photonaturalist.com/digital\\_imaging/info.html](http://www.photonaturalist.com/digital_imaging/info.html)

[www.slideprinter.com/giclee-prints.htm](http://www.slideprinter.com/giclee-prints.htm)

[www.staplesart.com](http://www.staplesart.com)