



Duganne Ateliers

A Visit to the Fine Art Prints Atelier of
Jack Duganne

The Inventor of Giclee with the
Legendary Iris Giclee Printer





Caption for front cover: *Jack Duganne in his fine art atelier.*

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Introduction

Everyone who has read about the development of giclee fine art printing has heard the story how the word giclee was invented. Iris printers had been used for proofing in the 1980's. A proof is a trial print, so print shop personnel (and the client) can see what the final production would be like (the final product is usually printed on a more long-lasting ink and paper combination). Proofs only need to last a few weeks, indeed that's about how long Epson and Canon dye inks last. Epson dye inks are very popular for proofing (but in the 1980's, Epson was not yet making inkjet printers; Iris was the elite brand in that era).

But photographers and artists began to experiment with the Iris printer, especially Graham Nash of the music group Crosby, Stills, & Nash. The output was gorgeous (although the Iris printer was the most quirky finicky printer ever made). Artists who wanted to sell their Iris prints faced the difficulty that calling it an "inkjet print" was too ordinary. And Iris prints were infamous for not lasting very long (after all, they were never intended to last longer than proofing stage).

In 1991 Jack Duganne invented the pseudo-French word giclee to distinguish the artistic prints from the proofs. Giclee is an entirely made up word, from a similar French root meaning "to squirt" (as in squirting out any thin tube or nozzle). Indeed one of the most successful giclee atelier is named "Squirt Printing." The word giclee has an accent, but most American laser printers can't handle accents well, so we spell it without an accent.

During ten years giclee remained a high-tech niche-market pursuit. But by 2000 the Epson large format printer was available, and giclee began to take off. FLAAR began its first websites circa 1998, and by 2006, over a million artists and photographers had read the FLAAR website on giclee (in our first years we got a few thousand avid readers a year; now we get about a quarter of a million readers per year).

The Duganne Ateliers Today

I first met Jack Duganne and his wife when he gave presentations about giclee at GraphExpo '04 trade show in Chicago. He lectured again at Print '05, but in a different series and area than where I was lecturing, so regrettably I missed his 2005 lectures. If he is speaking at a venue near you, his presentation is worth attending. His handouts were especially informative.

After attending two of his lectures at GraphExpo 2004, I also saw Jack Duganne at I believe a PMA trade show, and I think it was 2005, when he was at the ColorSpan booth, discussion how satisfied he was with his ColorSpan DisplayMaker printer.

So let's look to see which of the many printers that Jack Duganne has had over the years that he actually uses today. This is another thing you will learn when you visit large successful print shops: they have gone through a lot of printer brands that were maybe great in their day, but with the technology available in 2005-2006, today there are newer printers that are better than yesteryear's prototype. If you look back at it, the Epson 7000 and 9000 were almost a beta-test



Jack Duganne in one room of his spacious atelier.



printer for everyone: for the manufacturer and for the user. Same with the 7500 and 9500. Sometimes it takes several generations of printers to get it right. 2005-2006 is the time when many of these brands have come out with their third generation printer, so now is the absolute best time to be looking for a new printer.

ColorSpan DisplayMaker Printer

Since FLAAR has experience using two ColorSpan DisplayMaker printers for many years, I can understand why Jack Duganne likes his X-12 model. The ColorSpan does great on canvas and on watercolor paper.

ColorSpan had a progressive series of printers. Each generation of printer offers a host of improvements, refinements, and speed upgrades over earlier models:

- XII
- Mach 12
- ** (this is the one Jack Duganne uses daily)
- ** (this is the updated model)

Some models of ColorSpan printers support 12 colors:

- CMYK
- Light cyan
- Light magenta
- Light yellow
- Light black
- Blue
- Red
- Orange
- Green



The ColorSpan DisplayMaker X-12 printer in the giclee studios of Jack Duganne.

Other models of ColorSpan support a special palette of 11 colors

- CMYK
- Quad-black
- 88
- 99
- 77

At FLAAR we had one of each:

- XII with all 12 colors
- Mach 12 with quad-black, CMYK, plus &&&

Jack Duganne knows every printer out there. He started with an Iris, indeed he was present when the entire giclee phenomenon began throughout the 1990's. But you don't get 11 or 12 colors on an Iris (or Epson), and no matter how much cleaning and maintenance a ColorSpan printer requires, it is a breeze compared with the challenges of trying to keep an Iris running. An Iris must be kept on 24 hours a day, every day of the month. That's why its inkjet technology is called "continuous inkjet." Yes, it continuously jets ink, whether you are printing or not.

With ours, to save ink over the holidays, we did what was called for to shut it down. But when we wanted to use it again a month or so later, we never were able to get it printing properly again. Perhaps the spare parts are not being manufactured any more and so what you get are remanufactured. I only know that the lab crew struggled for several weeks and then gave up. We use it in our museum, because the Iris was indeed the



reason for the entire giclee movement. And without giclee, the whole décor industry would not have started. But Duganne Ateliers produces giclee and fine art photographic prints, not décor.

Jack Duganne currently has the following printers in his studio:

- Two Iris printers (notice not just one, he has two)
- Epson 10600
- HP Designjet 130
- HP Photosmart 8750
- ColorSpan DisplayMaker X12

But he says of his ColorSpan printer, “This is my workhorse, this is the one I use the most. I use watercolor paper such as Somerset Velvet Enhanced, and canvas.”

Why still have Iris printers? Because he and his fellow print masters know how to handle an Iris. They do not have a learning curve any more. But primarily most traditional giclee studios keep an Iris around because their older clients are accustomed to Iris prints and the studio needs to match the original Iris appearance (not that it is better, but only an Iris print is an Iris print).

On RIP Software

Jack Duganne likes Caldera RIP, a French software. This is definitely a RIP for the upper high end, since it is legendary for complexity. Jack said he has also used the Wasatch RIP, but this does not support the ColorSpan printer (ColorSpan offers its own RIP software). ErgoSoft also does not support the ColorSpan. It takes a special RIP to handle 11 or 12 colors.

Distinctive Fine Art Photographic Prints from the Duganne Studio with the HP 130

This humble looking HP DesignJet printer is sort of a secret weapon for many photo labs and photographers. I would call the HP 130 a “sleeper,” which is a compliment, defined as “a secret agent who lives an ordinary life until called into action.”

The design of the printer is the same as several HP office printers. But a combination of the Vivera ink, the high-tech printheads, and the exclusive fine art photo media result in a really special look on the resulting print. Once this printer goes into action, the results are far from humble.

Jack said that at one workshop he attended he had the following printers available:

- Cymbolic Sciences LightJet (costs over \$150,000, an RGB light imager)
- A Kodak thermal dye transfer printer (cost in those days about \$5,000, offers continuous tone since the dye ink is transferred via heat, so there are no individual drops; this is not an inkjet technology; it is what photo labs use, since they have to produce continuous tone).
- An Epson Stylus Pro 7600
- An HP Designjet 130



The HP DesignJet 130, ready to print fine art.



Jack said, "I unplugged the 7600 and rolled it into the corner. I skipped lunch even. This (the HP 130) prints better saturation, better reds, better gamut all together."

We agree with him on the HP 130. This is fully the quality of a darkroom photo (without all the grain of film). The HP 130 capabilities come in three sizes:

- HP 30, desktop size, for up to 13x19 inch prints
- HP 90, 18-inch width, to compete with the Epson 4000
- HP 130, 12-inch, competes favorably with the Epson 7600.

Our Epson 9800 should arrive in a week or so; an Epson 4800 has recently been installed in the building next to us on campus so we will begin comparisons with these shortly. But remember, the Vivera inks in the HP 130 allow you to easily print on glossy photo media without bronzing. Bronzing is the grungy-look that you get with Epson and most printers when you try to use pigmented ink on glossy paper. So if you need to print photographs, as fine art photos (or any other application), an HP 30, 90, or 130 would be a printer that we rate the highest. The only other printer we rate at this level would be the HP 8750, which is exceptional, but at present available only at 13 x 19 inch size (not for roll-fed paper either; only sheet-fed).



Jack Duganne working with the fine art prints from the HP 130. The close-up shows the range of fine art photography that he prints for clients with the HP 130.

Printing Fine Art Photographs in the Duganne Studio with the HP 8750

Jack Duganne was one of the first photographers who uses the HP 8750 because he has seen all the other printers so knows with his own experienced eyes which one is best. The HP 8750 produces eye-popping colors, since the printer itself offers nine colors

- Cyan
- Magenta
- Yellow
- Black
- Light gray
- Dark gray
- Light Cyan
- Light Magenta
- Blue



HP Photosmart 8750.



Blue and three blacks are the special “colors” here. Epson has also realized the benefits of three blacks. ColorSpan uses a full-set of quad-blacks. Ilford won a print competition several years ago using multiple blacks in an Encad printer that could handle 8 ink channels.

Conclusions

One fact you learn from visiting any professional giclee atelier is that they use more than one brand of printer, or at least more than one model of printer. Jack Duganne has several quite different printers.

The same in other print shops. The closest giclee print shop to us in Ohio is in Toledo: they have about nine printers from about four different brands. FLAAR at BGSU has many different brands too; some work best on canvas and watercolor paper; others we use only for photographs; a different printer is better for printing on silk or cotton.

It is the same with cameras for fine art photography. Often a photographer will use several different sizes and shapes and technologies of camera equipment to capture the fine art images, on film or on a digital sensor.

Then there are exceptions to this rule. The exception is a print shop that uses only one brand of printer.

Squirt Printing uses only HP Designjet printers. I mention this company because they are renowned for the quality of their digitizing of the original paintings.

Fine Art Impressions uses only Epson printers. I list them for the same reason I mention Squirt Printing: Gary Kerr is a master at digitizing original paintings. I consider the team at Squirt the best that I know on the West Coast, and Fine Art Impressions as the best I have seen on the East Coast. Dozens of other capable giclee printers exist, but the places that I know personally are the Duganne Ateliers, and two just mentioned, and Jim Trotter (the top photographer in St Louis). He prefers to use a ColorSpan, for the same reason that Jack Duganne does. Trotter has a Roland, and likes it, but finds the ColorSpan better for many applications.

I have been told of other print shops that used to have only Iris printers. Several have only or primarily ColorSpan printers. Yes, there are a few places that still use only Roland brand. And I have seen exemplary results from the Mimaki JV-22.

So your choices are:

- Iris (remanufactured and rebranded as the Ixia)
- ColorSpan
- Epson
- HP
- Mimaki
- Roland

A Mutoh Falcon II printer is fully capable of printing giclee quality, but the Mutoh company does not focus on this particular market. There are other brands that can produce décor, such as Encad. Why is that not a printer most people would consider going out and buying today just to print giclee? And which of all these brands should you consider?

The FLAAR Reports offers a 50+ page discussion of each printer, brand by brand, model by model. Our discussions are based on site-visit case studies (such as visiting the Duganne Ateliers) as well as our own experiences with our own 23 inkjet printers.



Concluding Comments on the Duganne Ateliers

Visiting the Duganne Ateliers is an experience. It reveals the best technology available today, combined with a sense of history of the beginnings of the entire giclee phenomenon. But realize that Jack Duganne is a special kind of giclee experience: his is truly an atelier. Many other giclee companies are production houses; there is one in Dallas that is a factory (at one time they had over 15 HP Designjet 5000's and 5500's in a row, all cranking out prints). That kind of factory would be considered a producer of décor, for interior decoration. Indeed some companies are switching over to using solvent ink printers. Indeed one of the oldest giclee factories in the US is reportedly already using solvent ink.

I know print shops that use UV-curable inkjet printers to print directly onto pre-stretched canvas.

You don't see any décor at the Duganne Ateliers. Jack Duganne and his team produce only giclee (on their ColorSpan) and fine art photography (on their HP printers when they don't need the photos on canvas; on canvas it is back to the ColorSpan).

I found the PowerPoint presentations of Jack Duganne to be of great value at the annual Chicago printer trade show each September. The long trip from Ohio to California to visit his giclee atelier was definitely worthwhile. There were several artists from diverse backgrounds painting in their studios within his larger overall complex. The entire facility is like a commune from the 1960's.

Prior to visiting the Duganne Ateliers I had heard of the HP 8750 printer, and had seen it at trade shows. What was different was now hearing from a person that had compared the HP 8750 with an Epson R800 and other Epson printers. And his realization of the impressive output of the HP 130, I share wholeheartedly. That's why I like my mural-sized prints of my panoramas done with the HP 130.

So if you want your fine art photographs printed by the person that invented the word giclee, his Duganne Ateliers accepts print jobs from outside photographers. It would seem that a fine art photographic exhibit, printed by a prestigious name such as Duganne, would be an asset in publicizing your exhibit, and in setting your exhibit up several notches above other merely ordinary displays.

The website of Jack Duganne's giclee and fine art services is www.duganne.com, fax (310) 314-3312.

Glossary

The forced years of studying French in prep school have left me with a typically American inability to properly pronounce French, but I do understand enough of the language to understand. This is a digression to what I intended to present here, namely a glossary of "studio" and "atelier." I cover the subtle albeit distinct differences among giclee, fine art photography, and décor in other FLAAR Reports, all of which are available on www.wide-format-printers.net.