

Converging technologies

Historically, photography and printmaking first converged

when Karl Klic invented the photogravure process in 1879. Photogravure prints are created when carbon tissue, a positive transparency and a variable etch combine to make continuous tone (photographic) prints on copper plates, which are printed onto printmaking papers. Very few contemporary artists use this technique as it is very laborious.

Contemporary photographers and printmakers can now utilise the computer and image manipulation software to create images. There are now many new photographic and printmaking possibilities, and the area of overlap between photography and printmaking processes is very exciting.

Visual artists can have digital files printed in a variety of ways. The Pegasus or Lambda process creates images on light-sensitive photographic papers. Large format professional quality Epson inkjet printers print onto a range of printmaking and photographic papers. The archival quality of all these digital printing techniques is very good indeed.



Mark Kimber ICE 2005, Lambda print
60 x 150 cm, Courtesy of STILLS Gallery, Sydney

The current UltraChrome K3 Epson ink when combined with quality digital printing papers has lightfastness ratings of up to 75 years for colour and 200 years for black and white prints. Many of the low cost A4 Epson desktop inkjet printers now have pigmented inks that produce images of high quality and archival longevity. Even the inexpensive Epson Stylus C67 which retails for around \$100 uses a DuraBrite Ultra ink that has excellent lightfastness, and the printed images are water resistant, which is very handy if you are printing digital images to combine with dampened intaglio printing processes.

But printing the digital image onto printmaking or photographic papers does not suit all artists. Some artists are reinvestigating older photographic processes and combining them with contemporary digital processes. Digital files created in Adobe PhotoShop are used to print cyanotypes, platinum or palladium prints, and daguerreotypes.

In 2005 I participated in a workshop at RMIT in Melbourne with Dan Burkholder from the United States, one of photography's digital pioneers. The workshop was organised by Silvi Glattauer who runs photographic printmaking workshops at the Baldessin Press, St Andrews, Victoria. Burkholder combines the soft lustrous qualities of platinum photographic prints with pigmented colours printed from an Epson inkjet printer onto quality cotton archival papers. At his workshop the emphasis was on understanding how to create very high quality film transparencies. This knowledge can be related to both photographic and printmaking processes.



Silvi Glattauer Little Landscape - No. 2 2003
photogravure from polymer plate, edition of 10, 13.5 x 13.5 cm

The production of high quality film positives and negatives is now possible from a range of Epson inkjet printers and specialist transparency film. Instead of taking a digital file to a film-printing lab, we can now print our own film positives and film negatives. It is cheaper, and we have control over this process.

Many photographers and printmakers are now making photogravure plates using low-cost film positives and photopolymer plates. The advantage of making a photopolymer plate (rather than printing black and white photographs) is that the plate can be printed with the pigment-rich intaglio inks onto archival papers in a range of colours. For more colour printing options, two or more plates can be made and printed as duotones or as CMYK 4-plate colour separation process. And pre-sensitised metal plates, such as AquaBlue and Mitsui, can be exposed with photographic images, and then worked again with traditional printmaking techniques.

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Christine Aerfeldt The giant mountain flowers watch the two children disapprovingly 2003
inkjet print, 16 x 22 cm

The Charles Darwin University Art Collection

IN AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY

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Of national and perhaps even international significance, the print archive represents a range of some of the first prints ever produced by a number of Australia's most senior and respected Indigenous artists from remote communities in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.⁴ Many of these artists' family members are today, in collaboration with Northern Editions, continuing and extending what has become an established community printmaking practice, complementary to painting, sculpture and weaving. Former resident and visiting artists from across Australia and South East Asia, including Ian Abdullah, Brook Andrew, Dadang Christanto, Yuan Mor'O Ocampo, Ardiyanto Pranata and Judy Watson, are also represented in the Art Collection's print archive.

At this stage, there is no permanent museum to house and display the Collection, but works are exhibited on a number of University campuses and rotated from time to time. Special displays have also been mounted in conjunction with University events, and exhibitions have been staged at The Gallery (run by the School of Creative Arts & Humanities) on Casuarina Campus since 1993.

Two fine examples of prints from the Art Collection, produced at Northern Editions in recent years, include Kathleen Paddoon's *Nakarra Nakarra #1* and Philip Gudthaykudthay's *Wagilag Sisters*. *Nakarra Nakarra #1* echoes the graphic strength of the artist's pictorial motifs in acrylic paint on canvas. Her work's aesthetic possibilities are however, enriched and extended via the subtle colour tones and gradations possible in the medium of etching. Similarly, Gudthaykudthay's confident line work and distinct mark-making as a bark painter, and the resonant warmth of his ochre palette, are invested with renewed vigour, tonal nuance and graphic power in print form.⁵

Currently comprising more than 1200 items, the CDU Art Collection is a testament to how geographic isolation – essentially a matter of perspective – can be transformed into regional advantage. In 2006, the Collection continues to work in partnership with Northern Editions as the beneficiary of its print archive – documenting, cataloguing, displaying, providing access to prints, and promoting the importance of printmaking as an ever-evolving, contemporary art practice in the Northern Territory and beyond.

Anita Angel, Curator, Charles Darwin University Art Collection, Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory

Notes

1. Ian McLean, 'The importance of university art collections', *Art Monthly Australia*, no.119, May 1999, pp.22-23 at 22.
2. See the CDU Art Collection's website: www.cdu.edu.au/vc/artcollect.html
3. See: www.cdu.edu.au/northerneditions for further information about Northern Editions Printmaking Studio, Gallery and Sales.
4. Including the late Paddy Carlton, Abie Jangala, Mick Kubarku, Queenie McKenzie, Darby Jampijinja Ross and Rover Thomas; Paddy Bedford, Johnny Bulun Bulun, Banduk Marika, Eubena Nampitjin, Dorothy Napangardi and Freddie Timms.
5. See: *Imprint*, vol. 40, no. 3, Spring 2005, p.25, 'NT News' including photograph of Gudthaykudthay inking the etching plate for *Wagilag Sisters*. The etching has been shortlisted for *The Talis Foundation 2006 National Works on Paper* exhibition, held at the Murrumbidgee Regional Gallery.

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Both photographs and prints are made from a matrix. With traditional photography the negative in the enlarger is the matrix. From the negative an edition of photographs is made. With printmaking, the plate or multiple plates are the matrix, from which an edition of prints is made. Each photograph and print is hand printed, and the number printed form an edition.

If a digital file is created to print an edition of prints or photographs, then the digital file is the matrix and the editioned prints are *limited edition fine art prints*. Currently many artists are having drawings and paintings reproduced in editions using the beautiful quality of inkjet printing. By comparison, a reproduction is the duplication of an original painting or drawing by photomechanical processes. Editions of prints made in this way are *limited edition reproductions*.

But how do we know which is which?

When I attended a Southern Graphics Council Printmaking Conference in Washington DC in April 2005, one of the panels discussed this issue. The panel suggested that museum curators and gallery directors in the United States now use the term 'Giclée' to describe a reproduction print, and the term 'inkjet print' or 'archival inkjet print' to describe a fine art print.

We have come a long way since the invention of photogravure. The overlapping of photography and printmaking gives rise to so many expressive possibilities. From the beautiful quality of large format inkjet prints to the delicate rendering of polymergravure printing, there are always new materials and processes to explore and combine.

Dianne Longley, South Australian visual artist and lecturer

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Olga Sankoy *Equivalence #3* (detail) 2003, Pegasus print and etched zinc 28 x 53 cm