

# Considerations for Giclée Framing

by Jeff Dorgay



*In addition to black and silver metal moulding, Jeff offers this extruded aluminum moulding for a more “industrial” look.*

**A** lot has happened in the art world over the last six years. When I started producing limited edition prints of my automotive images, hardly anyone I spoke with knew what a giclée print was and many potential customers were suspect of anything

“printed on a computer.” Now my customers want to know what printers, paper, and inkset I am using and how long I will guarantee print permanence. (And that’s a good thing!)

At my automotive fine art studio in Phoenix, AZ, all of my work

consists of digitally manipulated photographic images which are then used to produce giclée prints on watercolor sheet and canvas, as well as a series of open edition prints that are printed on a matte surface, photographic sheet. While much of what you already know

As digital art becomes more commonplace, it's become increasingly important to become educated about this media. Knowing how to identify, handle, house, and store these works of art enables you to assist your customer in deciding how to frame their items. In this six-part, bimonthly series, "Digital Directions," PFM has invited several writers in the industry to discuss the topics related to this subject today. This month, Jeff Dorgay, a photographer who prints and frames his giclées, write about his framing methods for these items.



*The subject matter of Jeff's giclées is a variety of automobiles and motorcycles. Seen here is a digitally manipulated image of a motorcycle.*

about framing “traditional” artwork applies to giclées, there are a few special requirements. Here is a bit of insight into the day-to-day workflow at my studio:

We use the Roland Hifi Jet with a CMYKOG (cyan, magenta, yellow, black, orange, green) inkset for about 90% of our prints. The Epson uses a CMYKlclm (light cyan, light magenta) ink and is a bit more suited to images with more subdued tones, while the Roland is used for those images with extremely bright, saturated primary colors. Both machines use pigmented, archival inks with approximately a 120-year lifespan on approved media.

We have been printing giclées

since 1996, and have seen a tremendous increase in framing sales over the last three years. To keep life simple (and shipping damages to a minimum) we frame everything with metal moulding. (Jokingly I tell my customers that they get one more choice than they had with the model T—silver and black.) While we used to do most of our framing during the holiday season, it has now become a consistent part of our business. All that asking people if they want fries in college has finally paid off!

Mounting for the giclée on watercolor paper is very straightforward. We leave about two inches beyond the image and tape the print down to the matboard with

acid-free tape. A backing board is cut from acid free foam core and we are ready to assemble.

Most of our canvas prints are sold unframed, but when we do send one out stretched, I make custom stretcher bars out of 2"x2" stock on my table saw exactly to the image size and extend the image around the stretchers for a gallery look.

All prints done on photographic paper are cold mounted. For those of you new to framing giclée prints, this is an essential! You can not dry mount a giclée print, the inks will melt and you will have a very unhappy customer on your hands. At our present rate, we are using the 3M adhesive in

rolls. It comes with a slip sheet and squeegee type applicator. You mount the adhesive sheet to the print and then to the mount board of choice and press down. We are very close to moving up to one of the large, roll mounters as our volume increases.

We use UV-filtering polycarbonate sheet instead of glass with all of our prints. I feel it protects the print and cuts down on shipping weight and damage, as well as giving the customer a lighter object to hang on the wall.

We use Crescent 1609 acid-free white for all matting. (I'm a purist, no colored mats here!)

WallWerks is still a fairly low volume shop, but there are times when we have to get 30 to 50 framed prints out in a very short period of time, typically when we get back from a show or are working on a corporate installation. Through the use of equipment such as the Fletcher 3100 Multi-purpose cutter, the Phaedra fence system, and the DeWalt and Delta compound mitre saws, I am able to keep productivity humming in my framing operation.

This equipment really allows us to do is sell more framing, which in turn leads to more profitability. For instance, as we've streamlined our backroom operations and we frame more of the art we sell, the average sale has gone from the \$100 to \$150 range for an unframed print to the \$300 to \$400 range for the framed piece. The most common framed dimensions we do are 24"x24" and 30"x36".

In addition to cutting the polycarbonate sheet, matboards,

and backing boards, we use the cutter to cut double and single weight cardboard. We do this to create our own custom boxes for each framed print. The advantage to this is three-fold: we eliminate waste and inventory by not needing to stock multiple box sizes, the prints are protected much better as we are able to package right to the art and eliminate shifting around during shipping, and last but not least, bulk cardboard is much cheaper than buying boxes.

By figuring out a custom packaging solution, we have kept our damage down to four pieces last year, out of about 1,500 that were shipped to all corners of the world. (For what it's worth, we use FedEx and FedEx ground exclusively, because you can manage it all from the web from shipping, to ordering packaging supplies to tracking.)

While I enjoy my work, having a few high performance tools and paying a little extra attention to the fine details will go a long way in making your giclée framing operation fun and profitable. ■

## Giclée Do's and Dont's

- Buy cotton gloves. Wear cotton gloves as much as possible when handling these prints to minimize getting skin oil on the prints. I know it sounds obvious, but keep those hands as clean as possible! That print won't last if it has oily fingerprints on it.
- Invest in a large, flat cabinet for print storage. Some of the watercolor sheets can be a bit unruly, so a big cabinet is great to keep artwork out of harms way before mounting.
- Keep your machinery clean. If you are printing your own prints, be meticulous about keeping the workflow clean. A clump of dirt here or there will ruin the print during production. Pay extra attention to your framing area as well, the surface of a giclée print is damaged easier than a lithograph and next to impossible to retouch.
- Roll with the curl. Do not roll a giclée print against the natural curl of that print material, especially with watercolor paper. This will cause microscopic cracks in the print surface, which will cause problems down the road. ■