

# What is an Iris Inkjet “Giclee” Print?

Iris printing has become a highly visible and rapid growing segment of the fine art and photograph world. In the art publishing field Iris inkjet printers have come to be called “giclee” prints. Giclee is a French word meaning “squirt” or “spurt”. In this usage giclee alludes to the digitally controlled inkjet nozzles of an Iris printer which precisely “squirt” millions of microscopic droplets of ink per second onto a rotating drum with the media in place to form the image. A typical 22X30 inch Iris image is made up of well over one billion individual ink droplets!

The Iris inkjet printer produces high quality prints suitable for gallery or museum exhibitions or editions. With an apparent resolution of 1800 dots per inch, the detail and color vibrancy exceeds traditional print - making technologies such as lithographs and serigraphs. Unlike desktop inkjet printers the Iris uses a sophisticated print head that disperses each ink drop in a micro-fine mist of tiny droplets to create a smooth continuous-tone print. Ink is sprayed onto the surface at the rate of 4 million 1.5-micron droplets per second. Average imaging time is 30-60 minutes per print. The prints have a “made-one-at-a time” quality that is very appealing to artists, dealers and collectors alike.

Iris prints have a unique artistic feel that must be seen to be appreciated. Prints can be made on any material flexible enough to wrap around the drum and capable of holding the water-based ink; this would include water color paper and canvas. Some artists add their own touches, such as pen & ink, foil and paint, to the finished print for a mixed media effect that makes each piece unique and original. For an artist, the economic benefit stems from the fact that one can order Iris giclees only as needed. The up-front costs needed for conventional lithographic processes is eliminated. If the first few giclees of a planned edition don't sell, the artist never has to order another print of that edition. In effect the print on demand nature of this process allows the artist to test the market in an economical means. The client can call and order more prints as they are needed, sold or ordered.

Literally dozens of museums in the US and abroad have either mounted exhibitions of Iris giclees or purchased them for their permanent collections. These include The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), The Museum of Fine Art (Boston), The Guggenheim (New York), The National Gallery for Women in the Arts, (D.C.), The Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), and the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (New York) among others.