

Where is the original?: The making of fine art prints

Fine art prints are original works of art - multiple originals.

A common misconception about creating fine art 'prints' is that the art work produced is an unaltered copy or reproduction of an 'original' art work such as a painting or drawing. This misunderstanding is sometimes further exacerbated by the fact that these 'prints' exist as multiples, in a numbered edition. Original fine art prints are printed by hand with consistency and accuracy as essential qualities. The tactile nuances of human touch are present in each individual print.

'Matrix and Process'

The artist creates the image directly onto a block, plate, acetate sheet or stone using a variety of printmaking techniques. This process creates a *matrix* and is specifically made to create fine art prints. It is from this matrix that an original print is produced, primarily by applying ink by hand to its surface and then pressure to transfer the ink onto paper, most often with the aid of a printing press. It is usual practice for a professional printmaker to undertake two roles in this process; to work closely with the artist to assist them in developing the matrix (the Collaborator) and to professionally print or 'edition' the image by hand according to the artist's instruction (the Editioning Printer).

'Edition'

An *edition* refers to a sequence of multiple fine art original prints that have been faithfully hand-printed to be consistent with the final artist-approved proof. The edition is numbered and limited to a certain size, less than 100, and once the edition and proofs have been signed by the artist, no further impressions can be printed and the matrix image is destroyed to protect the integrity of the edition.