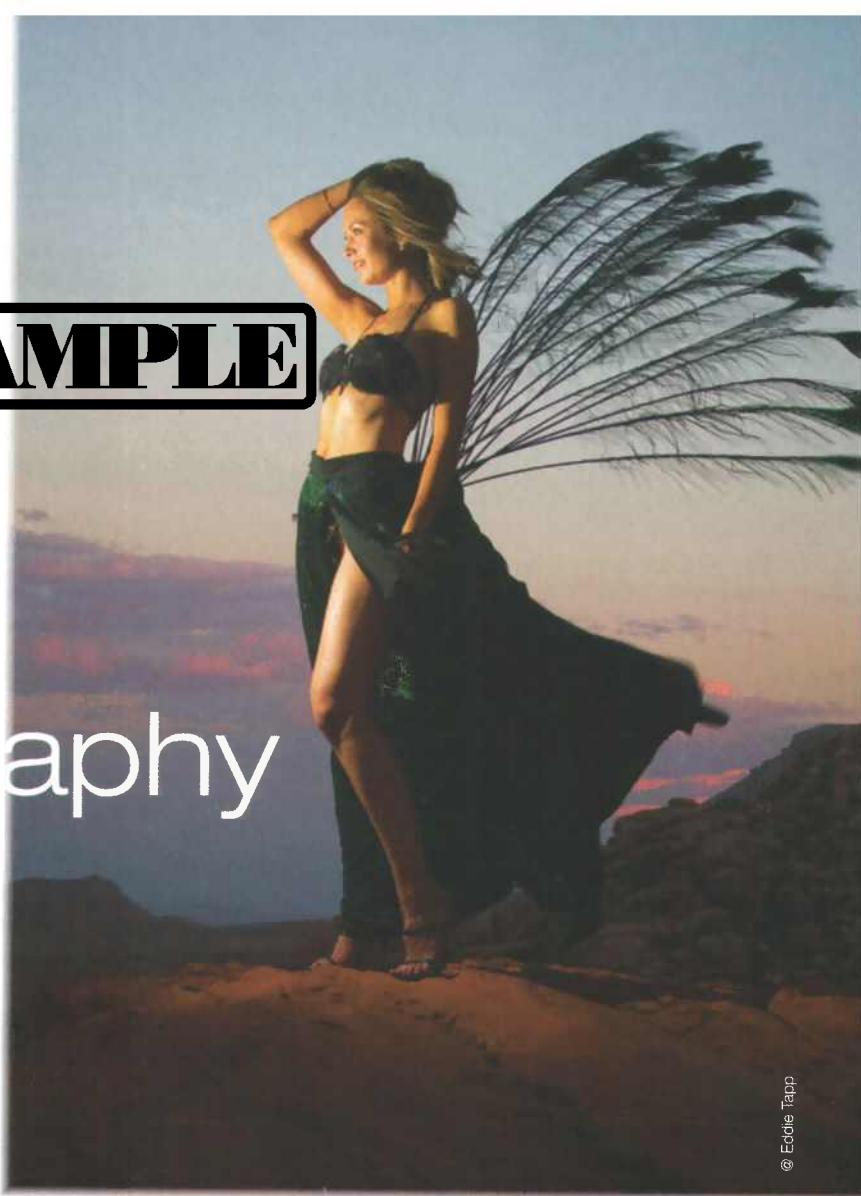


Zooming in on **SAMPLE** Digital Fine Art Photography



By Jeffrey Steele

Year after year, the digital fine art photography market continues to grow.

Its key drivers? One is the creative inspiration of those working in the field; another, the steady evolution and continuing improvement in new media products.

This month, we'll expose the trends impacting this market, and the growth and opportunity in this industry niche. We bring into sharp focus the unique applications made possible by the digital technology and photographic inkjet media used, and the specific enhancements those new media products have brought about.

Finally, we enlarge on how digital fine art photography pros are coping with a sputtering economy that has eroded discretionary spending on fine art purchases.

Explorer of light

Few are better equipped to comment on the growth of digital fine art photography than Atlanta-based photographer Eddie Tapp (www.eddietapp.com). Not just a photographer, Tapp is an educator who travels worldwide to train photographers, corporations, government agencies, and large and small studio operations in digital print media.

He also is an Explorer of Light, part of an exclusive Canon-sponsored program including just 50 or 60 photographers around the world, and a Canon USA PrintMaster.

Most giclee printing today is inkjet printing, Tapp says, noting photographers are generating stable fine art pieces through the use of large-format printing. "With the exception of scanning technology, the inkjet technology has improved the most," he observes, adding that those improvements are seen most in four areas.

The first is the longevity of today's ink and paper, resulting in prints that can last 100 years or more, depending on the combination of ink and paper used. The second is color management, or the ability to control delicate and brilliant colors and tones. That's important to both artists and photographers, because with respect to reproducing the work they've created, color management is the means to ensure color matching.

The third is an improvement in the ability to control some inkjet properties, such as bronzing, the tendency of a pool of ink to create a bronze-like tone from a certain angle. Bronzing falls under the heading of metamorphisms, anomalies that result in viewers seeing in inkjet print different colors, depending on light sources. "With improvements in inkjet technology, metamorphisms are somewhat controlled," Tapp explains. "The shock of going from one room to another is not as severe."

The fourth key improvement is the ability to attain proper printing highlight detail, therefore avoiding a problem

SAMPLE

called “gloss differential.” Says Tapp: “For many years, you could take an inkjet print and tilt it a certain way, and there wouldn’t be any ink in the highlight. That would show up as a higher gloss. The situation today is that the drivers generate a combination of ink to eliminate this problem.”

How is the digital fine art photography market coping with the state of today’s economy? Tapp reports most photographers he knows have seen a decrease in their business in the past year, but are handling the situation well. In some cases, the decline has been as much as 20 percent; in other instances, photographers have witnessed gains. “Most of them are just cutting back on all their expenditures,” he says. “As a way of coping, they’re not spending as much.”

One factor in photographers’ ability to weather the decline has been the growth in production facilities, he adds. “I was just in Dubai teaching a workshop, and students told me they didn’t have any sources of large-format inkjet printing, so they have to send their photographic work out of the country to gain high-resolution prints,” he says. “Here in the states, every city has a service bureau or lab, and 10 to 15 percent of the professional studios have in-house operations that produce their own printing.”

Wax Works

Offering a different perspective on today’s digital fine art photography market is Leah Macdonald, artist and creator at Philadelphia’s WaxWorks Photo.

An artist, teacher and professional wedding and portrait photographer, Macdonald has perfected the merging of photography, beeswax and oil painting, known as encaustic painting. Encaustic painting dates to 800 BC,

when the Greeks used it to paint their fishing boats. Egyptians later mastered the art form in their portrait painting. “It was used very classically and very artistically after that, for portrait painting,” Macdonald says. “It’s seen throughout the history of art. It’s a very gentle and kind type of painting, a very forgiving medium—and organic.”

After displaying her encaustic painting in her graduating exhibition as a California College of Art graduate student, Macdonald moved to Philadelphia and began showing her work in galleries and exhibitions. Those viewing her encaustic paintings “found the

@ Leah Macdonald

@ Eddie Tapp

SAMPLE

works unique, breathtaking, spiritual and highly textural," she says.

Her studio, Waxworks Photo, produces custom commissioned pieces for photographers worldwide. Photographers send their work to Macdonald, she prints the photos, and then offers them one of two different end products. One is mounted on a hardwood substrate, the other produced on Hahnemuhle paper.

In producing the hardwood-mounted product, she pours about one-eighth of an inch of wax over the photo to create an exceptionally smooth surface. She then tints the photo by applying oil paint to the surface of the wax. The Hahnemuhle paper prints, printed on an Epson printer, are brushed with wax to create a visually arresting texture that resembles linen thread. Macdonald then uses oil sticks and tints the wax to create a work that appears to be a melding of modern technology and ancient craft.

"Those pieces are extraordinary," she says of the Hahnemuhle pieces. "The wax on the paper is just absolutely breathtaking.

"It makes a photograph look like a pastel drawing. I apply the wax, and kind of tint the original image. I don't change [the photographers'] colors. If you send me a very vivid blue, I'm going to mirror that. I make your photos look good. I embellish what's given to me. I give it luminosity and depth. I can make backgrounds recede and

A 72-inch DaVinci printer helps NYC-based Duggal Visual Solutions stay ahead of the technological curve.



foregrounds pop forward. It makes the ordinary extraordinary—or at least different."

In this digital age, Macdonald believes her distinctive difference is the work she does with her hands. Photographers once spent great amounts of time in the darkroom tinting and toning, but today spend much more time in PhotoShop retouching. "I like a photo that has feeling. I'd rather work with my hands than through digital technology."

Among her unique pieces is a series she calls "Female Fairy Tale." She shot 29 different women wearing the same

continued on page 30

A CENTURY OF EXPERIENCE... in textile manufacturing

High quality standards, product innovation, quick response and continuous reinvestment in our manufacturing facilities are the strengths that have made Aurora a textile industry leader for over 100 years. Put our experience to work for you.

Manufacturing a full line of fabrics and canvas for...

- Digital (UV & Solvent)
- Dye Sublimation
- Litho
- Screen Printing

Aurora Specialty Textiles Group, Inc.
P.O. Box 70, Aurora, IL 60507 | 1-800-864-0303 | www.auroratextile.com

ISO 9001:2000 Certified.
A Meridian Industries, Inc. Company

up to 125"

For more information, visit www.wide-formatimaging.com/enquiry

Fine Art Photography

continued from page 21

Victorian-era wedding dress, and transformed them into encaustic works. "Female Fairy Tale" will be on exhibition in the summer of 2009 at Galerie BMG in Woodstock, NY. Her limited edition art book, titled "Relent," showcases original wax-on-wood and wax-on-paper pieces created on inkjet paper provided by Museo Paper Company. It will be sold through Waxworks (www.waxworksphoto.com) and her own website, www.leahmacdonald.com.

Her work may be seen as a kind of reaction or response to the highly advanced state of today's digital photography. "Digital photography technology has become so fail proof, so good, that anyone can shoot a great digital photograph," she says.

"In the old days, the technology of film separated the ordinary from the masters. You could see the technical difference. So I offer something that's handmade and one-of-a-kind that makes one digital photograph stand out from another...I'm offering people the opportunity to make their digital images intimate and special."

As to how she's dealing with the challenging economy, she says she keeps her overhead very low, uses her own backyard studio, gets help from her students, and has enjoyed "great support" from paper companies like Hahnemuhle and Museo.

"I have a lot of faith that my individuality and creativity will sustain me," she says. "And people who recognize that will want my products...Technology is wonderful, but we have to combine that with what we can do with our hands. We can embrace the future, but we can't forget the past."

Fine Artistic Details

Duggal Visual Solutions is a New York City company launched by founder Baldev Duggal in the 1960s as a photo lab. The company now does everything from wide-format billboards and three-dimensional installations to fine art reproductions.

Duggal Visual Solutions has always been an innovative company seeking to stay ahead of the technological curve, says fine art manager Linda Tutnauer. "In the fine art department here we were the first company to work on a Roland DaVinci printer," she says. "And we are one of the few companies that run a 72-inch Roland DaVinci."

Much of the fine art photographic work the company handles is of black-and-white photographic images; for this reason Duggal works with four different shades of selenium-tone blacks. The result is a much greater tonal range and the ability to gain far more detail from a scan, whether it's its own scan or that of the photographer. In addition, Tutnauer reports working with orange and green inks, as well as light and medium magenta and light and medium cayenne. This enhances tonal range, to give photographers the greatest depth and most accurate color match to prints submitted.

Tutnauer has several papers from which to choose, and has found the papers differ in their ability to hold the density of the blacks depending on how they've been coated

by their manufacturers. Finding the right paper to use is a matter of both trial-and-error experimentation and personal experience. "I can generally look at an image and make a judgment," she says. "A softer paper will actually start to buckle if you lay too much ink down on it. If I see an image where I want to hold the depth of the blacks, I may choose a smoother paper that can hold the richness of the blacks."

Noting "products are changing every day" in this swiftly evolving field, Tutnauer says she has found some niche paper manufacturers whose products are distinguished by even, consistent coatings. Obtaining that kind of consistency is important to Duggal Visual Solutions, because of its focus on ensuring everything is as archival as possible.

Addressing the economic slowdown, she adds, "We have a fairly good reputation with certain houses, and when photographers need work done, they'll bring it to us. Some photographers with less money, especially art students, are ordering smaller images. And on our end, we try to waste as little as possible." ❖



Jeff Steele is a freelance writer who specializes in the field of business management, marketing, and protocol, especially as they apply to wide-format printing firms. Contact him at scribsteel@ameritech.net.

Family Business

continued from page 25

the family business, but know very little else. The fear of upsetting the established status quo of secrecy and diplomacy or of reprisal by the targeted party (owner) many family members opt to not exercise their rights as co-owners. Heirs or successors, frequently not current owners, have no such rights and as such remain out of the loop until it's too late. They feel powerless, legally and diplomatically to approach the inevitable. Unless the owner(s) volunteer information, the discussion is dead in the water.

Open discussions, as difficult as they may be to initiate, are a must if you are to begin to strengthen the resilience of your family business. You don't want to wait until it's too late and have Uncle Sam knocking at the door for his share of the estate... you may sadly realize that you can't even afford to keep your family's heritage and your birthright!

The time to deal with this issue is when there is still time to do something—like now!

Next month's article deals with the last issue concerning succession—successors or heirs to the throne of the family business. ❖



Dr. Marc R. Dussault is an Exponential Growth Strategist, award-winning author, recipient of several sales and marketing awards and has more than 20 years of printing industry experience. For exponential business-building ideas, visit his website www.MarcDussault.com.