



How to Make Money: Selling Your Giclée Prints

Salt of the Earth is run by individuals with decades of marketing experience. We've produced this and other Smarticles™ to help you promote and sell your prints successfully. That's in our best interest, too, because when you sell, we get fresh orders!

"Why have giclée prints in the first place?"

There are sound financial reasons for offering a range of archival quality giclée prints of your artwork or photos.

- Life is short. You can only create a finite number of stunning images in your career. Giclée printing means that you can sell your best images over and over to keep revenue flowing – even after retirement.
- By offering prints – either as limited or open editions, you spread your name more widely, broaden your appeal, and attract shoppers with different budgets.
- Giclée provides not only the highest quality printing available today – full of vivid hues, a rich grey scale and incredible detail, but also an extremely affordable print-on-demand medium. Use each sale to finance more prints for your growing clientele.
- Top quality always sells. Even in times of recession, finest quality and luxury goods remain buoyant. There are always discriminating buyers willing to pay for the very best.
- Giclée prints speak volumes about your own standards. Excellent reproductions enhance the public's perception of you as a discerning creative person.

"What's your best route to market?"

In fact, there are really only a few basic selling options plus a number of variations. Each option has its pros and cons. Let's go through them.

1. Sell through a bricks-and-mortar gallery or shop. In this case, you may not be making any immediate sales, as most shops only take prints on a "sale or return" basis.
2. Sell online via someone else's "gallery" or "shop"
3. Sell direct online via your own website or e-commerce gallery
4. Sell direct and face-to-face at an art fair, on a market stall, exhibition stand or Open Studio event. This way, you get to meet your public and learn tons!

Galleries

Being "taken up" by a gallery can be a thrill. But keep your cool. Galleries are not gods. As TV comedy "Ab Fab" character Edina once told a snooty art gallery assistant, "Lose the attitude – this is just a shop, you know!"

As always, whenever there's a middleman involved in a sale, he will expect to take a substantial percentage of the selling price. In London, physical galleries charge 60-90% commission because of their hefty overheads and brand cachet, leaving artists with little except another bullet point on their C.V. Of course, the gallery slice is smaller in the provinces – usually 40-50% - but so is the selling price.

If you are an artist in traditional media and a gallery wants to show your originals, make it a condition that they also offer some of your giclée prints. Why? Because not every gallery visitor can afford original art. A superb giclée print – especially one of a signed limited edition, is both attractive and affordable to a greater number of shoppers.

NOTE: if you don't push galleries to include your prints – ideally of images NOT featured in the

exhibition, they will rarely invite you to show/sell them. That's because gallery margins on prints are relatively modest. Galleries would rather devote space to "big ticket" items i.e. original paintings.

You must look after your own interests and fight your own corner. Obviously, it is to your advantage to have images at various price levels to attract purchasers with different levels of spending power. So go for it!

Virtual outlets

Online galleries either charge artists a fixed annual fee or a percentage of the selling price. The advantage of this option is that it's fairly affordable and easy. But ask questions before you sign up, give them details they may share/sell or pay anything. How many unique visitors (not page impressions or hits) do they get each month? How many pieces of art did they sell last year? How many artists do they show, and what percentage of these made sales in that year? If they flannel – either don't know or aren't telling, give them a wide berth. Also, bigger is not always better. What are the odds that anyone will notice your work among 10,000 other thumbnail images? One site you might want to consider, however, is www.etsy.com where photographers and artists (as well as craftsmen) offer their work internationally; think "décor" rather than fine art.

Your own online shop

Selling your work direct gives you more control of promotion and selling – and potentially, greater earnings from your efforts. Consider all online possibilities – not just websites. These days, billions of people are part of Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, etc. Some visual creatives use social media to network with useful contacts and to make sales. If you find such channels a bit haphazard, shallow, or just too intrusive in your private life, then a website/shop might be a better place to start.

Designing a website is now pretty cheap and easy, thanks to "templated" formats and CSS (cascading style sheets) that automatically replicate and maintain certain design features throughout. You will get a design layout into which you can drop text and jpeg images. "Simples", as they say. But if you want to operate a shopping basket, take orders that produce a growing database of clients and also receive funds securely, a larger investment will be necessary. Get yourself a fast broadband connection, then seek expert help and estimates from several recommended web designers. Don't try D.I.Y. design unless you REALLY know what you're doing; it's always a false economy. Ask about hosting, too; make sure your website will be available 24/7 and won't crash.

How effective are websites for selling art or photos? There's no simple answer. It depends. Great images are often best appreciated "in the flesh". Back-lit screens give a different impression. And templates that force you to crop part of every image to fit a standard size and shape are actually doing your work a disservice.

Remember this: you may create a really snazzy website. But that will count for nought if nobody knows it's there. Make it fast and easy for them to find you. Promote your website!! List it on lots of directories. Use Google AdWords to guide the right target audience to your site. Make regular text changes to your Home page, and follow the other rules of search engine optimisation and user-friendly website design.

Even in this digital age, you should consider using print media. Professional magazines are kept for long periods and are often shared with like minded colleagues. Ads and editorial in respected publications can work well for you; balance initial cost against their longevity and you'll appreciate their good value.

Overall, take expert marketing and Web design advice and never be complacent. An online presence is not a static "poster", it's a dynamic beast. Feed it, groom it and keep it strong. You will be rewarded!

Face-to-Face

If you want to understand which images your market likes, how much they're willing to pay and a whole lot more, get out there and meet them! Many U.K. and European cities regularly stage street markets and creative festivals. Do a bit of research, get the details and then have a go. If you can, attend first as a visitor. Chat with exhibitors. Observe how your competitors present themselves. Make notes about what you'd do differently and better, and maybe take a few reference shots with your mobile phone.

If you do commit to an event, plan it meticulously. Have a checklist of all the bits and bobs you'll

need - hanging hooks, Velcro, labels, etc. then box everything neatly. Create a powerful, professional first impression with good signage, tasteful trade leaflets and cards, informative text and photos about you, the artist or photographer, a portfolio to browse and a visitor book for comments. Dress well. And whatever you do, don't ruin your lovely images with cheap, ugly, ready-made frames. Frame to do justice to each image. Yes, it will cost more. But quality matting and framing will help you sell more, too. Don't skimp!

There are several key art and photography fairs around the UK and Europe. Paris Photo is the world's largest annual photo fair and marketplace, showcasing both well-known and rising talents. Fotofest, held the same week in Paris, is a 3-day event combining portfolio reviews by experts in the photo market plus a chance for serious mid-career shooters to meet people like leading gallery owners, agency reps and art directors who could give them priceless guidance. For photographers, artists and illustrators try the Spring and Autumn Fair at the NEC, Birmingham, where fine art publishers and merchandise firms scout for "commercial" imagery for the décor market. Other interior design/décor events include Decorex and Top Drawer in London. Fine art flourishes at the capital's Frieze Art Fair, and The Affordable Art Fair in both London and Bristol, which attracts buyers from around the world.

If you can't afford these options, then at the very least, take part in an Open Studio initiative; you don't need a studio of your own, because there are always temporary group venues in churches, village halls, etc. Google. You'll find tons of open art and photo studio trails throughout the UK. Join in and supply the organisers/promoters with some of your images plus a well thought-out write up about you and your work for their catalogue. You might even find one of your works on the cover!

The first time you sell your work face-to-face, you may not sell a thing, but you will learn a huge amount in a short time. Dress well, put on a confident smile, and be ready to explain things like, "Where do you get your inspiration?" and "How much would it cost for you to do a portrait of me/my dog/my grandson?" You should also ask questions if you want to emerge wiser about your market's preferences. Try, "Are you interested in something as a gift - or for yourself?" Then pursue the tastes and lifestyle of that person. Get chatting about where they live, leisure activities - anything that will put you on a friendly footing.

Price to sell and title to spark interest.

Of all the issues related to making giclée sales, nothing gives artists and photographers as much angst as how to price their prints. How much is enough? What's too much? Should you ever reduce prices? As you become better known, how much more will your work be worth? And does size matter?

For starters, a price that's too high in a countryside setting will probably look very reasonable - or even cheap, in London, Edinburgh or Bristol. Scout galleries to see what comparable work sells for, and then work backwards from gallery price to what you can expect if selling direct. Use your survey as a benchmark for what the local market will bear. Once you know which type of work sells best, edge the prices of those items up a bit.

Size really is an important factor. In general, people are willing to spend more for bigger prints and unusual formats, e.g. long panoramas, squares or triptychs. The exception to this rule? Detailed, realistic miniature paintings, which can fetch very high prices.

Keep your pricing fair and attuned to local budgets. You don't have to pay gallery or shop overheads, so sell direct at an attractive price; buyers expect to get "a deal" when buying from the artist. In fact, the simple phrase, "Well, ordinarily that one would sell for X. But if you really like it...(thoughtful pause, while they hang on your every word)...I suppose I could let you have it for Y." They'll feel chuffed at getting a bargain, and frankly, you may have made a killing. It's all in the game.

Never take the apologetic attitude of "I know I'm unknown and not worth very much." Baloney! In this world, if you don't value yourself, nobody else will. And it's easier to negotiate down than up. Never alter prices at an event, unless it's the end of the day and you just can't face wrapping and packing the whole caboodle up again. Dealers sometimes make the rounds just before show breakdown to snap up juicy bargains. It's up to you.

Titles are more vital than you might suspect. Give your images titles that will engage the viewer and build bridges between his experience and the emotions or subject that inspired each image. How many people can relate to the opaque "Number 22" or bland "Beach"? Try "Mountain Mystery" or "Heavy Weather, St. Ives", or "Falling Out of Love" - whatever will intrigue the viewer and draw them into heart songs and wanting to live with your work.

Last but not least, tell them about YOU. We're all nosy human beings. We like to read or hear about

what makes creative folk like you tick. Sure – tell them about your awards, exhibitions and training/self-taught background. But please avoid a formal or precious approach. Always provide a conversational, compelling, carefully spell-checked Artist’s or Photographer’s Statement with a friendly photo of you that visitors can read and take away. You may be amazed at how often these give-away items are retained and shared, leading to still more sales long after you’ve forgotten the whole event.

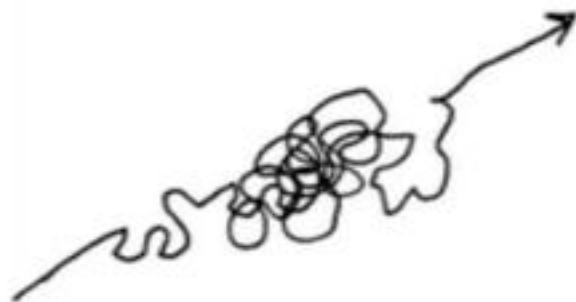
Good luck. Now get out there and make your mark!

Success



what people think
it looks like

Success



what it really
looks like

