

PAPER for DIGITAL PRINTS

SURFACE

Bond paper for Laser Printers or Copiers is not suitable for artwork (except maybe for proofs). Note, however, that the surface of the paper changes the way the ink is absorbed which can drastically alter the appearance of the picture, which means that the proof is not a very good representation of what a final print may look like.

The thickness of bond paper is too light (20lb.), the color is not necessarily a clean or consistent white, the brightness is too low, the texture is uneven, and the size is more closely related to business documents than anything in the art world.

So what do we use? We could look to the manufacturer of the printer, Epson, a company that supports high quality imaging. Epson Specialty papers are made in various sizes that render an image with almost photographic quality. The problem is that it is a high gloss surface. High gloss is usually used in the commercial side of photography and is also looked down upon by the art world. This is not just for spite, but because the surface is something you have to look through to see the picture, and therefore gets in the way. But the Epson surface is not that bad, and it is the best way to get really photographic looking digital prints.

Following this page is a list of many available papers, in the categories of

- Workprint Papers *thinner matte papers, not for final prints*
- Matte Papers *photo quality papers suited for portraits*
- Glossy Papers *photo quality papers but with gloss surface*
- Printmaking Papers *warm, soft papers for more aesthetic prints*
- Unique Papers *such as canvas, linen, velour and parchment*
- Transparency Films *and backlight films*

SIZE

Standard photography papers follow the convention of the original glass plate negatives with an aspect ratio of 4:5, yielding papers 4 x 5", 8 x 10", 16 x 20", etc. Unfortunately the desktop photo world has been invaded by business documents and their 8.5 x 11" format. Larger sizes are 11 x 17, and the various European sizes, such as A4, B5, super A3/B. Watercolor and drawing papers follow another format, such as 9 x 12", 15 x 22". If your work is going to be shown in a photo gallery, all glass is cut to the standard photo sizes, so carefully consider your picture size and how it sits on the paper, and how it will fit in a mat.

FIT

Epson ink is not waterproof! Therefore it is important to not have the image come too close to the edge of the sheet. The same fear of contamination by fingerprints has made a minimum 1" border, and usually 2", the standard in the Photo world. Not placing the print perfectly centered on the page is a sign of not caring. Placing a horizontal image on a horizontal page, and a vertical image on a vertical page, is another mark of professionalism. Ill-placed, misaligned, and oversized images all contribute to a poor looking presentation.

DIGITAL PRINTING AESTHETICS

ASPECT RATIOS

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 4 : 5 (4 x 5") | glass plate negative in view camera (traditional photography) |
| square (4 x 4") | medium format |
| 2 : 3 (4 x 6") | 35mm portable format |
| 3 : 4 (4 x 5.33") | digital format |

While the sizes in printmaking world can be anything, the legacy of the photographer's world provides some consistency. Everything should be done with a purpose. If an unusual size is being used, there should be a reason that is linked to the content. "Because I wanted to...", is not an answer. Why did you want to? "It looks good and I like it...", still is not good enough. Why does it look good, and how does the sizing relate to the meaning of the image? Form supports content. If there is no reason then there can never be any communication - which means that the whole thing is pointless. This is not an exercise in futility (unless you are French and a nihilist or even existentialist), this is a class in imagemaking.

Some meaningful aspect ratios other than photographic standards are: square, double square (Japanese tatami), 1: 1.414 (diagonal of a square = $\sqrt{2}$), 1: 1.618 (fibonacci proportion or golden mean), 1:1.777 (16:9 cinemagraphic), 1: 2.618 (double fibonacci), and 1:3.14 (π = the ratio of the radius of a circle to its circumference)

the CAMERA DANCE

A photograph is a recording of an artist's interaction with their subject, not merely a picture of the subject. Included in the picture information is the process and tools that were used. This helps the viewer understand how the photographer was looking. Every camera requires a different "dance", depending on the viewing system and lenses used. The waist level viewing system of a medium format camera provides a much different view than an eye level, light weight 35mm camera, and this is different again from carrying and setting up a view camera. These are all variations of the "Camera Dance".

If one starts cropping the photographic frame to any size and aspect ratio, the information of the camera dance is removed, making it difficult if not impossible for the viewer to see the photographer shooting, and therefore understand how the process of viewing took place, which in turn masks the reasons for looking. For this reason it is strongly recommended that you do not crop or re-size any pictures.

PRESENTATION

Matting is used to present a picture in a clean and neutral manner. Mats are usually cut with a 2 to 3" border. In printmaking the borders are constant and the overall size is just that amount larger than the print. In photography, the mats are cut to match the traditional photographic sizes. This lends a consistency to images in a show that may vary in size. Mats are usually cut to the next larger size than the photographic paper used. For example 8x10 paper into an

COMMUNICATION

The picture is what is on the paper. The image is what is formed in the viewer's mind, as a result of the linkage between the artist and audience. Art is about communication, not self-indulgence. «see - why make art?» If there is no clarity of vision, no purpose for making the picture, how can any viewer ever get a clear or purposeful message? If the viewer doesn't get it, then nothing has happened.