

Printing Makes You A Better Photographer

By Grant Gillespie

The very word 'Photograph' immediately brings to mind the image of a gorgeous print hanging on the wall or the pages of a photo album. **Monoculture** looks at printing.

Peter McKinnon advocates acquiring a good A3 printer and discovering the joy of making your own art prints, signing and numbering them. [youtube.com/watch?v=q6lMNDof9Rw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6lMNDof9Rw)



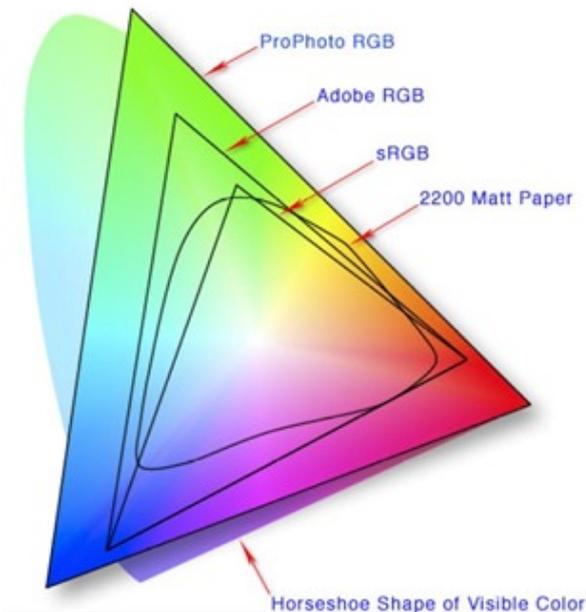
Even if we work only in digital, many of us come to photography with the notion of 'one day' making beautiful images and selling them. Digital sales is one avenue, but I suspect selling prints has the mindshare aspirationally.

While I admire a great print, I feel digital offers more of everything – more definition, more colours, more tonal range (sometimes called dynamic range). Others would argue it's not a photograph until you hold it in your hands, or stress the archival value, should something happen to your computer and backups.

Limitations

More is not always better, of course. It's an opportunity to get smoother tonal transitions, dynamics and colours, all of which look best... when you have a good image to begin with. This is where the limitations of print come into their own. Simplicity is the essence of great photography. Simple images make the best prints. Turn that around and you understand the value of printing photographs — best prints make simple images. **As you strive to improve your prints, you will educate your eye to seek out simple images.**

Peter McKinnon at petapixel.com





The bigger the print, the more you see. Paul Adshead at fstoppers.com

Processing

A print appears completely different to a screen image. You'll see things in your processing that might not stand out on screen - sensor spots, halos at edges of enhancements, how good your vignette really is, can your dodge and burn skills be improved?

Blacks

After printing, the quality of blacks and tonal range in shadows become readily apparent, in a way that you just can't get on a screen. The Histogram is a guide that needs a lot of shutter-to-print experience to give the full story of what's happening in an image.



Further Reading:

- <https://fstoppers.com/printing/why-you-should-start-printing-your-photos-1748488>
- <https://petapixel.com/2016/05/03/6-reasons-printing-photos/>
- <https://fstoppers.com/originals/why-printing-your-work-will-make-you-better-photographer-and-save-you-thousands-172396>
- <https://www.lightstalking.com/why-you-should-be-printing-your-photos/>
- <http://www.rangefinderonline.com/news-features/power-of-print/why-you-should-still-be-printing-your-photos/>
- <http://kenrockwell.com/tech/printers.htm>
- <http://uk.pcmag.com/printer-reviews/5558/guide/12-tips-for-printing-great-photos>
- <http://au.pcmag.com/printer-reviews/8637/guide/the-best-photo-printers-of-2017>

See Better

Something about being able to hold the whole image in your hand enables you to see the image anew. With a reasonable sized print, you'll see the whole composition, the light the shadows, the subject, the background in a different way than on a screen. Makes you more aware of what needs to be done better in-camera, because processing doesn't solve everything.

Inspiration

There is something about holding one of your images in your hand that drives a you as a photographer on to create more and better images... to bring them through the whole process to physical image. It inspires you to go back through your images, maybe reprocess for Print this time, and be inspired all over again.

Books

Ask me (personally) how you should print images, I will always say – books. Make a book a year, so you have something to show anyone who asks what kind of photographs you take. You will build up a library of your own work. It's nice to send a link to a gallery, but there's nothing more tangible and impressive than a book. It's like writing a hand written letter to yourself about how much you love photography. ■

Randy Kepple at rangefinderonline.com

