

The Step by Step Guide to Professionally Printing (and Framing) Fine Art

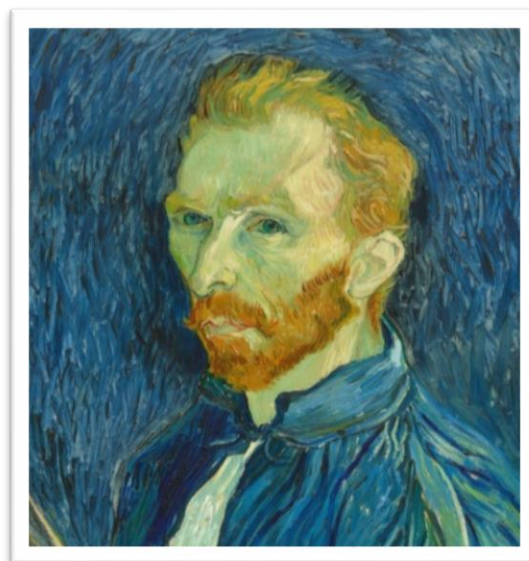
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This guide will show you where to find fine art for printing prints, what printing methods and materials you can use and how choose the right frame....

...Plus more.

We believe:

Art is the final puzzle piece you need to put a well-designed room together.



So, what are your options?

You could buy a mass-print from one of the many online retailers, but...

What's special about something factory made?

You could buy an original, but that would set you back more than you (or your client if you're a designer) would probably like to spend on one piece.

In my professional opinion, the best option *with the current printing technology available* is **fine art reproduction print printing**.

And THAT's what this guide will show you how to do.

In fact:

The second chapter of this guide already shows you **where to find \$100's of millions of dollars**, worth of artworks by the Greats like Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Goya, just like Van Gogh's self-portrait you can see above.

Plus where to access over 200,000 of beautiful untapped fine art photography from around the world...

...**All for free**, ready to be made into custom prints which you can display in your own home or include in your client's project.

Plus we are going to discuss a lot of other useful topics like:

- printing styles and techniques
- Fine art printing materials
- How to pick the right frame
- How to take care of your fine art prints and more.

So...

If you want to skip ahead to any particular topic, use the links below:

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Let's get started:

Keep These 2 Things in Mind When Looking for Fine Artwork for Print Reproduction.

Let's lay down the basics first...

There are two major factors to keep in mind when looking for fine art for print reproduction:

Image Resolution & Copyright Law

Image Resolution

You don't want to end up with a granulated image on your wall.

(Unless that's a new modern look you're going for)

Current printing technology allows us to **print higher quality images at lower resolutions** than before. But...

...there are a few factors to keep in mind.

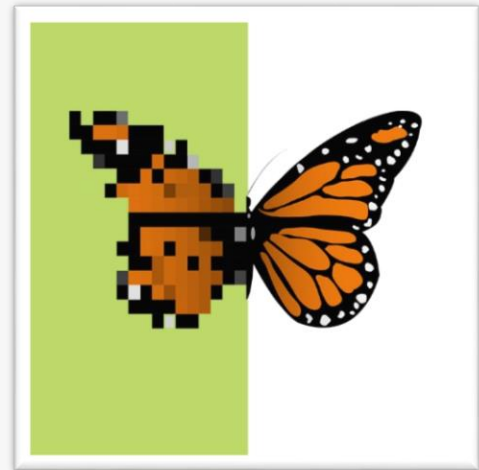
Any images you plan to use for printing fine art prints should be 240 PPI or DPI in relation to the physical size you expect to print*.

Used interchangeably in the printing world, PPI means **Pixels per Inch** and has to do with a digital image whereas DPI is **Dots per Inch** and relates to how many physical dots are printed within any given square inch.

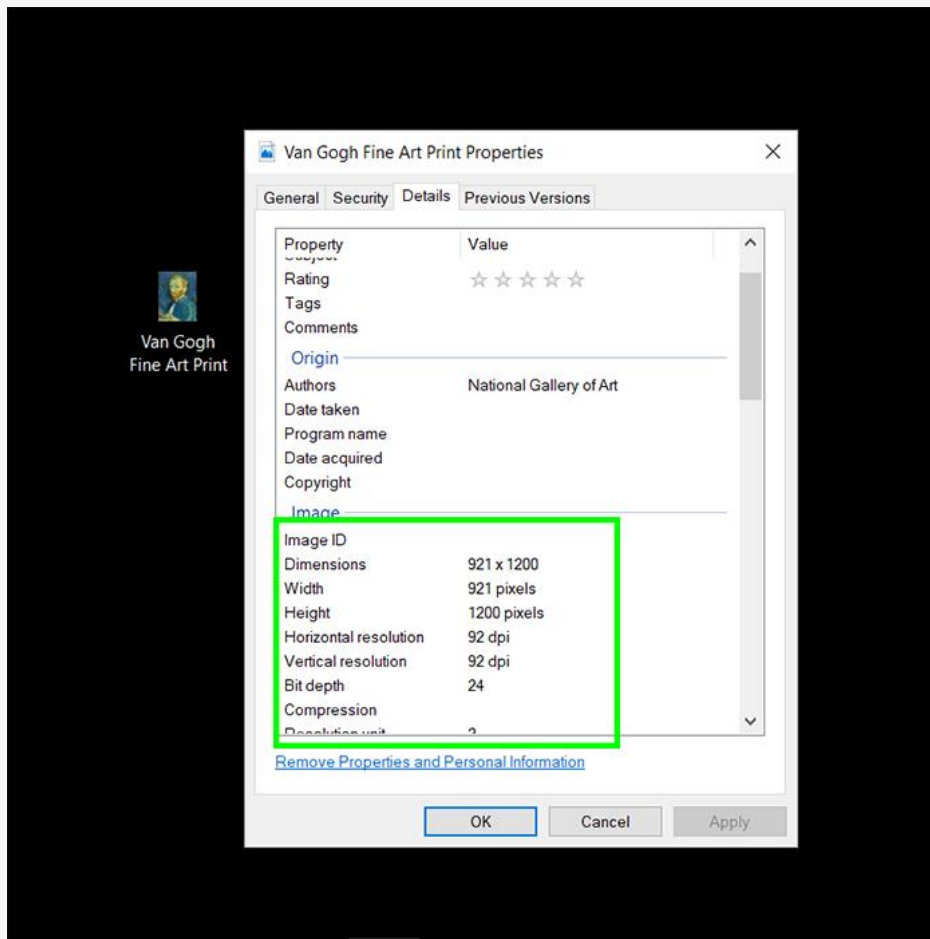
Having said that, ultimately how a print looks depends on its physical size, viewing distance and the material on which it's printed.

Interesting fact:

Professional Billboards are only printed at 15 DPI and glossy professional magazine photos are printed at 150 DPI.



How to find out an image's DPI:



Steps 1-6

1. Go to the chosen image on your computer.
2. "Right Click" the image file.
2. Click on "Properties"
4. Go to the "Details" Tab.
5. Under "Details", scroll down to "Horizontal resolution" and "Vertical Resolution".
6. There you will see the image's DPI as shown in the image above in the highlighted green area.

* Still unsure how to make sure your image looks great? [Get help from a professional printing expert](#). They have people who can make any image look its best.

Copyright Law

Images are intellectual property.

A photographer or artist owns the right to their image even if it's online. Just like...

...a movie studio owns the rights to their movie.

Copying or using someone else's intellectual property without their permission can lead to legal punishment and **hefty infringement penalties.**



Read on...

When looking for artwork to use for reproduction, you can either buy the image from a paid image source.

But:

There are plenty of great images out there that you can legally use...

These images are either under “public domain”. This means they are public property and can be used however you like.

Other images are under a **creative commons** license. Here's the difference:

Most artworks that fall under creative commons are not allowed to be sold commercially and often have other such restrictions.

Now...

Let's look at where to find high quality – and legal - images for printing fine art prints...

Where to Find Art to use to make high quality fine art prints

Great News!

Hundreds of thousands of fine works of art and fine art photography images are available **FOR FREE** to the public under a [public domain license](#).

When you know where to look:

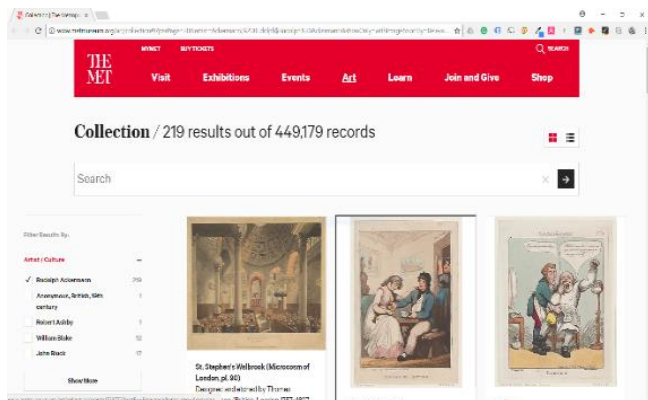
You can find many masterworks by your favorite classical artists, available for download and for use in your own custom print printing projects.



Here are a few of **the best** – in my opinion - **resources** to go treasure hunting for some of the **world's finest artworks** to use in your fine art prints.

1. The Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/>



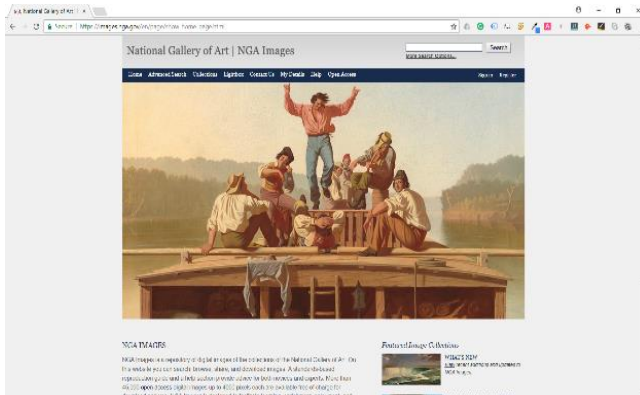
With over 400,000 public domain images of art pieces, the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art is a great place to start when looking for artwork you pay like to have printed.

Tip: Just make sure to check that you have selected “public domain” in

your search.

2. The National Gallery of Art

<https://images.nga.gov>

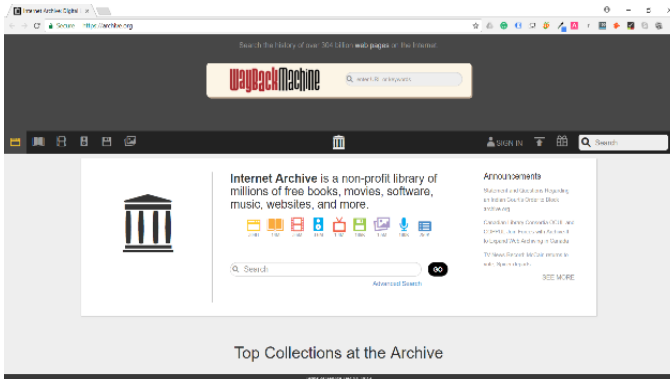


The national gallery of art is another wonderful place to look.

They have **over 35,000 works of art from artists including Rembrandt, Van Gogh, and Goya.** You literally have access to some of the world's finest art at your fingertips here.

3. Internet Archive

<https://archive.org/>

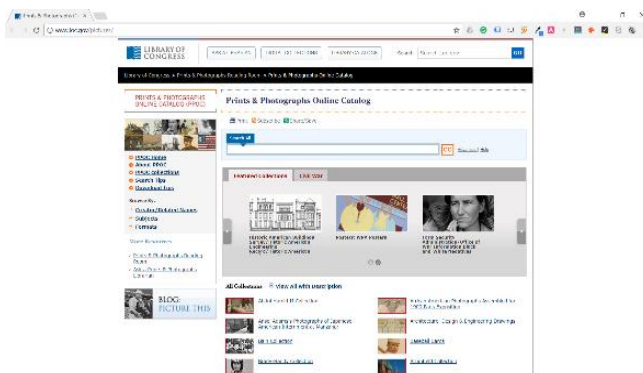


The Internet archive is meant to be “the library of the internet”.

The site itself claims to have “millions of free books, movies, software, music, websites, and more.”

4. The Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>



The Library of Congress is has many artworks under public domain and in fact **just released over 2,500 images of original traditional Japanese artworks** for those looking for something classically Eastern.

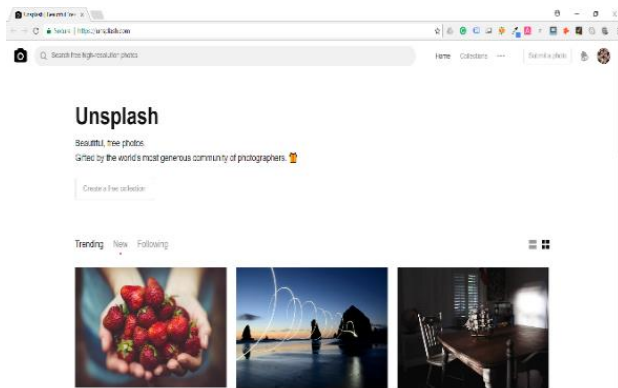
[Here's a direct link.](#)

Artistic Photography and Original Illustrations for Prints

Looking for professional level pixel-perfect photos or illustration to use for printing custom fine art prints? Here are **two of the most well-stocked - non-stock photo - resources online**. They are especially great for anyone looking for landscapes, animals, or artistic portraits.

1. Unsplash.com

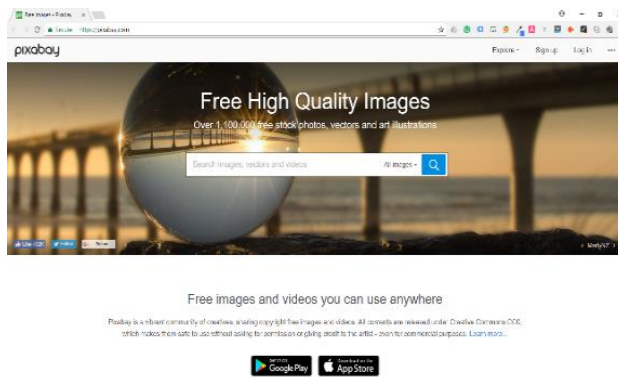
<http://www.unsplash.com>



Unsplash.com is relatively new. It's only been around since 2013. But with **over 200,000 photos** by professional and hobbyist photographers, it's one of the best places on the internet to find beautiful images you can print with ease.

2. Pixabay.com

<http://www.pixabay.com>



Pixabay is Unsplash's bigger and older brother. This site has been around since 2010 and has since collected **nearly 1 million public domain images** and illustrations from contributors around the world. Pixabay also houses a large collection of illustrations.

[Click Here to Check out the Resource Section for 30 More Places to Find Great Images](#)

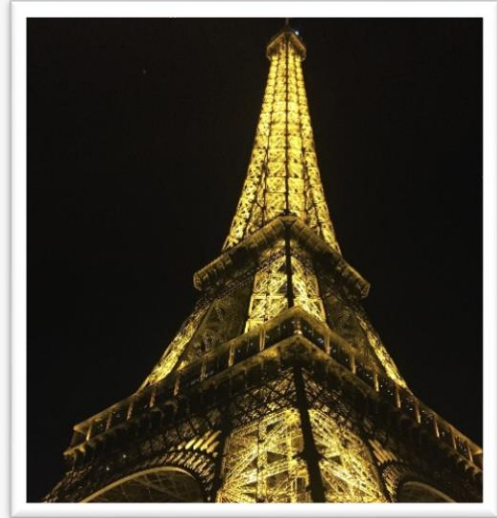
What is Giclee printing?

The name Giclee (pronounced Zhee Clay) originates from the French word “la giclée”, meaning something that is squirted or sprayed.

Giclee is a printing technique that produces Ultra High quality inkjet prints.

Here's how it works:

Professional artists and printers use high quality fade-resistant pigment based inks on archival substrate, which is a special acid neutral photo paper that makes images last longer while maintaining their color.



Basically, when done right:

“Giclee results in stunning art re-productions in fantastic detail, even from the closest distance.”

Keep this in mind!

If you're thinking of having your prints printed using the Giclee inkjet technique, your **images need to be a minimum of 300 DPI** (dots per inch, like we discussed).

This is an absolute must, because of Giclee's fine detail.

The other option is...

Offset Printing

Offset printing is one of the most widely used and oldest styles of printing and has been around since the 1870's.

When offset printing, an image is split into four “color channels” known as CMYK. This stands for Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black.

(K is black because the other colors printing plates are actually aligned with what is called the black “**Key plate**” during the process)



Most mass produced printed materials are still made today using offset printing.

(Think of newspapers, books, magazines, and posters.)

What's so good about offset printing?

Offset printing can work out **cheaper** than other styles of printing **when dealing with large quantities.**

Another advantage is quality:

Offset printing results in high quality final images which is exactly what we are looking for when reproducing fine art.

What are some disadvantages of offset printing?

A drawback to offset printing is the initial set-up cost.

Because...

Each new project requires color preparations and configurations.

This also means that **Offset printing can take time**, which can lead to frustrations.

Especially, if you wanted something done urgently.

What Material to print fine art on:

Just because you're printing fine art...

It doesn't mean you have to print on paper or canvas.

Click the Image below to see what our founder shares about the range of materials Frame Works Miami likes to use:



(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HcwMG6pNLg>)

There are lots of creative mediums on which you can print fine art.

And..

When you have a good professional printer...

...the options are almost endless.

The Key to picking the right Material for your art.

Here's an art world insider tip:

Start with the subject.

Think about what print medium will best connect with the image...

Emotionally, logically and aesthetically. Does it communicate the overall style you are looking to create?

As a general rule:

Reproductions of older artworks such as Van Gogh's or Rembrandts tend to look more "authentic" on matte materials.

Whereas...

New, floral, or bright landscapes "pop" more on glossy mediums. But remember:

There are no set rules of what is wrong or right in fine art printing. Be creative! Let's look at some materials in more detail, starting with the obvious:

Paper

Paper is the most versatile and commonly found printing material.

There are many kinds of paper. Each with their own subset of characteristics, value and best uses.

For example:

Do you want a **romantic classical look** to your artwork?



Then a matte, non-gloss paper is often more effective.

Or would you like your art to have a more modern and eye-catching sensation? In that case, glossy would be the way to go.

But there is more than just matte or glossy. There are four main categories of paper:

The 4 main types of professional printing paper

Matte Paper

Matte paper seems a little **grainy to the touch** and doesn't have the distinct shininess to it that glossier papers have.

It's great when you want something to have a softer look.

Matte paper is also useful for prints which will be kept behind glass. Because, **it results in much less obstructive glare** than its glossier counterparts.

Matte paper also has that "paper" texture to it, which is great when making prints people will touch or feel, like when printing a physical portfolio.

Luster/Satin Paper

Luster and Satin are types of what are known as semi-gloss papers. They are halfway between fully glossy and matte.

The great thing about a semi-gloss paper is that it will still give you that glossy sheen, but won't be as intense as glossy, which also becomes highly reflective and often difficult to see at certain angles.

Chat with your printer when deciding if semi-gloss is right for your needs.

Fiber base (Baryta) Paper

Baryta paper is the standard choice for high-end fine art photography. You've probably seen it without even knowing it. Most art galleries use a fiber based paper.

Baryta paper uses a chemical called barium Sulphate in its coating process.

This chemical enhances an image's detail and definition whilst slowing the print's aging process, otherwise known as archival permanence. This results in a longer lasting, high quality print.

Baryta paper is great for high value pieces you wish to keep for a long time.

Glossy Paper

Glossy paper universally popular for its high d-max and signature shine.

Dmax a measurement of a paper's maximum density and basically reflects how much black the paper can absorb.

A higher Dmax rating means deeper black inks. The ultimate depth depends on both the paper and the ink. That's why it's also important to find the right combination.

This is especially important for us at Frame Works. Our (new) fine art printer uses four kinds of blacks in every image for maximum image quality.

So a paper with a high Dmax can really make the most of the fine art printer's capabilities.

(We love glossy paper because it creates bold, striking images.)

But...

It can also lead to reflective glare. It's also normally not suitable for reproductions of older or pastel colors where it will contradict the style of the artwork.

Next...

Other Popular Printing Materials.

Brushed Dibond Aluminum

A popular choice for larger commercial prints and often found in offices and hotels.

Brushed aluminum provides a modern look with a metallic sheen where lighter colors are used but a contrasting matte finish on darker pigmented areas.

It's a popular material for artwork displayed outside because of its highly durable and waterproof nature.

People tend to love using it as a creative medium for fine art photography depicting city landscapes or scenes with concrete and metal.



Metallic, High Gloss Photo Paper

This high gloss metallic paper provides a “pearl-like” glossy sheen.

It's well-known amongst artists for its brilliant whites and **high Dmax** which allows for intense color reproduction.

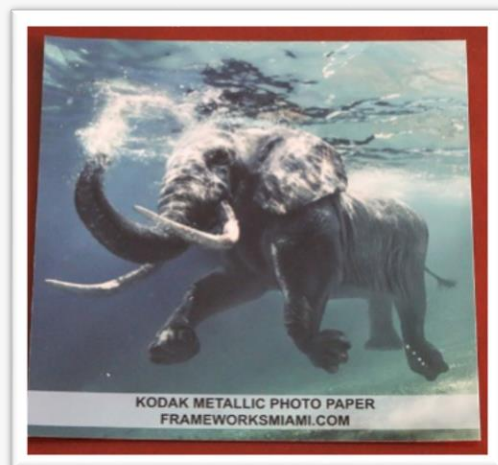
(Especially with highly contrasted images.)

Metallic high gloss photo paper has the advantage a generally long lifespan due to its chemical stability.

It is also quick to dry and resistant to moisture damage.

Its drawback:

Metallic photo paper **requires the right lighting** to reveal its best qualities. It's also not a suggested material when printing skin tones or portraits.



Glossy Canvas

Glossy canvases are a popular choice for fine art reproductions.

This is due to their **ability to intensify the tonal characteristics of an image** and to give a piece of art the sense of deep vibrant colors even when the original artwork didn't have them.

Pro tip: *Glossy materials often mask an image's smaller details. If your artwork has many intricacies, We suggest going with a matte canvas to accentuate the finer points.*

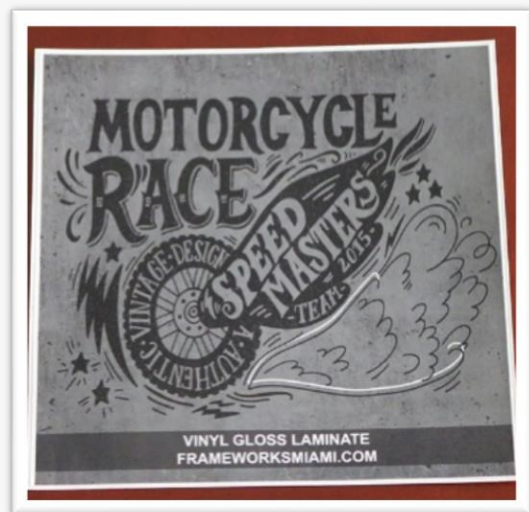


Glossy & Matte Vinyl

Vinyl is a commonly used material for larger banners and backdrops.

It's easily stored and moved from place to place which also makes it especially popular for events and temporary installments.

Insider tip: The Red Carpet backdrop celebrities take photos in front of is a vinyl print.



Plexi-glass

Acrylic, better known as plexi-glass, is a versatile printing medium with many advantages.

Plexi-glass provides a crisp image. It's a durable material that can withstand weather changes and hard knocks. You often see outdoor signs printed on plexi-glass.

(Think of those little signs with plant names on them in parts and the botanical gardens)

Another advantage of using an acrylic medium is that **it creates a certain 3D feel to** an image.

It also allows more light onto an image in comparison to other materials, due to its transparent layer.



Wood

Wood prints create a unique artsy look. Each wood print is unique, because of the grain differences in the wood itself.

Wood works really well when the art subject is wood, such as this barn artwork on the right.

Also, wood mediums tend to couple well with country style or ancient Asian pieces. (Remember, the original ancient Japanese art?)

Restaurants and cafés tend to love using wood for artwork. Next time you walk into a Starbucks, take a look around. You're bound to see a wood print.

Once you've found the right material for your art reproduction.



How to pick the right frame for your print

A frame can change the whole feeling of an art piece.

Picking the wrong frame can make even a Van Gogh look dull.

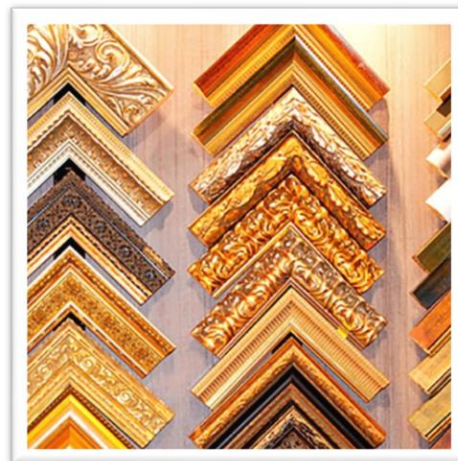
Whereas the right frame will complete your art's story, like the missing piece to the puzzle.

Here's what I can tell you after years of owning a picture framing business and helping thousands of people find the right frame:

Picking the right frame for a piece of art is just as much an intuitive process as it is a skill.

But, as a rule of thumb...

Here are a few frame matching techniques you can follow:



1. Balancing Opposites

If an image is **full of life, bold, or very eye catching** in of itself, a minimalist frame will often help balance the image's vibrancy and allow the art to hold your attention without seeming "too much".

On the other hand, if the print is clear, minimalistic or simple, you can go with a lavish gold or ornate custom frame.

The flamboyancy of the frame will help build a bigger story around the artwork, making it part of a larger scene and making the image seem more valuable.

2. Color Matching

Color matching is a simple design technique **used in all areas of creative design** from interior decorating to professional branding.

In picture framing, this technique is where you take a “sample” color from the artwork and re-use it in the surrounding frame.

This creates a subtle consistency between the image and frame.

Here's an example:

If you have a picture of an orange, you would pick a frame that matches the orange tones seen in the art work, or one that matches the orange's surroundings in the image.

3. Theme Matching

This framing technique is similar, but slightly different to color matching.

Most works of art have a theme:

It may be a beach theme, a city theme, a nature theme or something else.

Theme matching is when you pick a frame which **matches the overall theme of the art.**

Some like to use a thick wooden frame for a picture of a picket fence, or a bright glossy frame for art photography of a bowl of candy.

This is theme matching. Finding the “textures, colors, and motifs” or the art and using them in the frame itself.

4. Environment matching

This technique is different from the others.

Instead of looking at the artwork itself, **we find inspiration in the space around the artwork**, where it will be displayed.

If we know the print will be displayed in a hotel lobby with dark leather chesterfields and luxurious stately colors, we may opt for a similar style dark reddish brown frame to align with the theme of the print's environment.

After all...

It would look strange to put a beach themed picture frame on a piece surrounded by dark leathers and conservative styles.

Having said all this about frame picking techniques, I think, ultimately, the best technique is:

Merging all of these techniques together.

Try to keep each factor in mind when picking a frame. Think about the theme, the colors, the environment and how to contrast or balance the image with the surrounding frame. It's possible.

In fact:

This can work brilliantly, even when the artwork doesn't align with the theme or is in fact [opposing the environment's overall theme](#).

Want more framing ideas?

[Here are 33 picture framing ideas for you.](#)



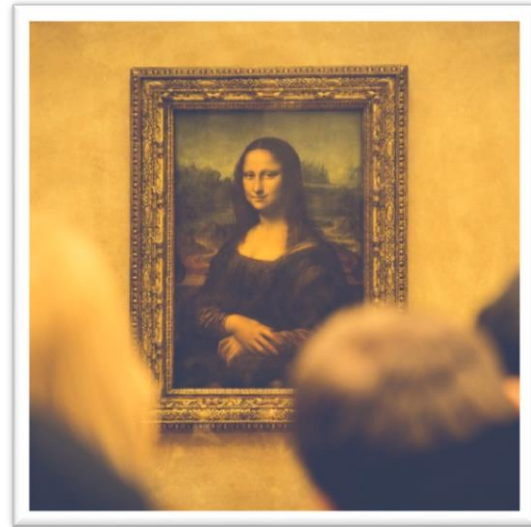
How to take care of fine art prints

Ok. You have made it this far. You have found and printed your artwork and it's framed beautifully.

But...

Without the right care, it won't last long.

Here are our top tips for taking care of your fine art prints to maximize their lifespan and vibrancy.



Sunlight & Indoor Lighting

Unlike real flowers, prints of flowers – or prints of anything for that matter - don't like sunlight.

In fact:

Direct sunlight or even artificial light will make your prints fade, quickly.

All prints are made with chemicals which react to environmental factors, especially light.

And...

...Just like our skin, **the sun's UV rays can also damage and prematurely age your artwork.**

A good way to protect your prints is to use UV glass or UV acrylic glazing which can block up to 98% of harmful Ultra violet radiation.

Also:

Keep your prints at least at a medium distance from heat sources. such as heaters, strong lamps, fireplaces and cooking areas to avoid damage.

The best would be to **hang prints at a minimum of 1-1.5 feet away** from lights or heat sources.

Humidity

Humidity (something of a troublemaker here in Florida) **is especially damaging to fine art prints.**

Long exposure to high levels of humidity will quickly cause mold and discoloration.

Plus...

Humidity tends to attract pests like silverfish which also love fine art.

(they have good taste)

Here's something else you may not have thoughts of.

Indoor plants.

Especially in warmer climate areas, when we water indoor plants, we are inadvertently increase humidity levels in the plant's immediate environment.

That's why:

Keep your prints in well ventilated areas - away from indoor plants.

For those up North with colder winters, do not place your prints directly above the heater.

Paper and canvas prints can warp and become brittle when exposed to hot dry air for long periods of time.

The colors on almost any printed material will also fade and deteriorate when exposed to direct heat sources for longer periods of time.

Bathrooms & Kitchens

If you would like to hand your prints as part of the décor in a bathroom or kitchen area, we recommend **glazing on the front** to protect them from humidity and environmental pollutants.

Also ensure the **back of the print is sealed** properly to stop moisture from leaking into the print.

(Concerns around moisture are - of course - more important with paper or canvas but not as big of a problem with plexi-glass or brushed aluminum.)

Handling prints

Some people go the full Hugh Hughes, with **white cotton gloves and face masks** when handling prints.

But...

I can tell you, it's not necessary.

Just be sure when handling prints, especially paper or canvas ones, that your hands are clean, and free of excessive oils.

Also make sure you **do not touch** the printed areas, the mount board, or the mat. Oily fingerprints can and will leave an irremovable mark.

The proper way to handle prints is by **gripping opposite corners**. For example, grabbing the top right corner and the bottom left.

Allow the print to sag slightly in the middle, but be careful of creasing it. Because, it is almost impossible to remove dents, creases or folds from paper prints.

Pro printer tip: *The borders around an art piece are for handling it. Don't trim or cut down the excess border on your artwork. It makes it difficult to handle the print without damaging it.*

How to store loose prints

If you have prints that have been taken out of their mounted frame for any reason, they should be placed in separate acid-free paper folders and stored horizontally.

Under no circumstances should prints be kept with the printed sides touching. This will damage both prints.

Make sure the space in which they are kept has a relatively stable temperature and humidity levels. The best is anywhere between 40-60% humidity and 60-80 degrees Fahrenheit (15-25 Celsius).

Also, keep an eye out for pests such as silverfish, ants or worms which can severely damage your art.

Pro printer tip: One natural remedy for keeping silverfish and ants away is the use of clove oil. Wipe a small amount of clove oil in the vicinity where the prints are kept, but never on the prints themselves.

Keeping your Acrylic or Glass Frame Clean

Acrylic and glass casings and frames are **simple to keep clean**.

An easy way to do this is regular dusting.

We recommend using a fine duster or a soft rag to carefully remove any dust from the surface of the glass or acrylic.

But it's also good to do a thorough clean once in a while.

Simply dusting can't get everything.

Properly clean the surface every few months with **real surface cleaner**.

But remember to spray the cleaner on your cleaning cloth or material, not directly onto the glass or acrylic itself.

Spraying onto the frame may not be a problem, but cleaners tend to drip and droplets can get onto an artwork's frame or mat which could damage the print.

Lastly, we recommend using a natural cleaning spray without alcohol or ammonia ingredients which tend to be harsh.

Now that you know all the steps of finding art, printing it, framing it and looking after it, you're ready to start printing prints with a professional.

If you're looking for even more information...

We've collected some of the **most useful resources** we could find on the internet (including a few of our own) with more in depth tips, tools and techniques in different specific areas of printing.

Happy printing!

Useful Fine Art Print Printing Resources

Printingforless.com

A glossary of commonly used printing terms.

Berk-edu.com

A deeper look into Fiber-based printing paper [pdf]

The Metropolitan Art Museum

The MET's open resource policy

[Traditional Fine Arts Organization \(tfaoi.com\)](http://Traditional Fine Arts Organization (tfaoi.com))

The ins and outs of Art Copyright Law

Urban.com

Image Printing – a digital guide to image file sizes.

99Designs.com

30 Public Domain Image Resources.

Piezography.com

A deeper look at Dmax and how it applies to your art choices.

Lifehacker.com

Photoshop tutorial for color correction and photo retouching.

RealSimple.com

A guide on how to choose the right frame for an art piece.

FrameworksMiami.com

13 Creative Fine art print framing ideas

Petapixel.com

A short but informative video about DPI printing resolution.

Want to talk to a Fine Art Printing Professional about your special project?

Give us a call at Frameworks Miami

+1 305 783 2378