



Photo prints that blur the line between photography and fine art

With a fine arts background Curtis Speer began a successful career in the advertising industry. He became an in-demand set designer and stylist, choreographing captivating visuals for clients. He also mastered the potential and power of the camera. By 2007 he was receiving encouraging responses to his Facebook photographs. This prompted a new career direction, as a fine art photographer.



Curtis Speer
photographs

Industry sector: Professional Photography & Graphic Design

Business name: Curtis Speer

Headquarters: California, USA

Testimonial from: Curtis Speer, fine art photographer

HP solution: HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer

Website: curtisspeer.com



Challenge

"I had to outsource my printing needs and was spending upwards of \$400 per print. As a result I was limited to a certain size of finished work. Instead of being able to give as much application as I wanted to the creative side of my work, I was spending too much time picking up prints."

Curtis Speer, fine art photographer



Critical crossroad and the milestone moment

Speer describes the twin challenges of cost and time which meant his intriguing career journey was dogged by the sense of not truly fulfilling his vision. It stirred an echo from his own childhood which inspired him to write his book, 'Three' which has been inducted into the US Library of Congress. The book invites a study of solitude. "I would spend time outside, far away from anyone. I tuned into the trees, the colors, the sounds and most importantly, the light. Movement, color, texture, light and shadows, they all play a major role in what I photograph."

However his frustration grew because the finished prints did not reflect the original subject. It led him to a critical crossroad. Speer says: "The milestone moment came in 2014. I attended Digital Solutions Cooperative (Dscoop), the independent community of graphic arts business owners and technical professionals who use HP Indigo equipment.

"I saw the HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer. I was astounded by the sheer beauty and quality of my images measuring 5ft by 4ft and looking bigger than life. I was also blown away by the richness of the color I was seeing.

"My challenge was to play with the HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer and push the boundaries; to see what effects I could achieve with different substrates such as mid-weight papers, watercolor papers and even 308gsm Hahnemuhl Matt FineArt paper. HP's Tom Wittenberg at Dscoop met my challenge and let me play with the HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer."

Solution

"I've lost count of the times people see my images in a gallery and ask me 'Is this a painting or is it a photograph?' HP has opened the door to blurring the line between photography and art. The HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer lets me truly illuminate the subtleties of life, death, color, contrast, texture and emotion."

Curtis Speer, fine art photographer



Flawless consistency as productivity soars

"The HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer lets me produce the same quality fine art prints at a fraction of the price. I can print an entire exhibit on a single roll of cotton rag paper without having to replace any of the 12 ink cartridges. The HP Vivera Pigment Ink delivers outstanding color gamut and print quality. From the first to the last print on a 110ft roll of paper the consistency is flawless.

"I didn't have to waste a moment worrying about uneven results. You can imagine how the HP Vivera Pigment Ink helped my productivity soar. Just as importantly it gave me great peace of mind. The HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer lets me truly illuminate the subtleties of life, death, color, contrast, texture and emotion."

Client feedback is supportive and persuasive. "They tell me that they love the way I produce and present images that turn upside down a perceived notion of how things are supposed to look. They tell me: 'You just broke all the rules'.

"The HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer delivers fine art gallery quality prints. On cotton rag paper the black appears so deep and rich that you can almost put your hand into it. The color gradation is so accomplished that the textural detail of the image on a fuzzy peach, for instance, has people wondering how I got it to look so real."

Result

"What the HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer is achieving in terms of excellent quality and integrity of image is there for all to see."

Curtis Speer, fine art photographer



Revealing the raw beauty of the subject

Speer says he now has the flexibility of printing on demand. "This translates into getting my clients the beautiful work for their homes with a shorter lead-time." His clients live across the USA, Europe, Australia and South Africa. "They share stories with me about what springs out of their lives. Sometimes it can be raw and visceral - tales of abandonment, neglect or lost opportunity."

He documented his journey to Theresienstadt, the concentration camp that imprisoned artists, playwrights, musicians, actors, singers and songwriters. This was a 'show' camp the Nazis used for propaganda. The images, printed using the HP DesignJet Z3200 Photo Printer, have been included as part of the permanent collection in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

His latest exhibition took place in Palm Springs, California, entitled Master Pieces: Breathing Life Into Bones. Without relying on sets, studio lights, or hours of post-production, Speer revealed raw beauty in his subject matter. "It could be the natural light illuminating and reflecting off the tangerine scales of a goldfish or the highlights in a rooftop taken over by nature itself."

He is impressed by "the level of commitment that HP has clearly made to the professional photography and graphic design sector. What the HP DesignJet Z3200 photo printer is achieving in terms of excellent quality and integrity of image is there for all to see. I really don't believe I need to look anywhere else other than to HP for the next generation of print solutions. I guess I am an HP for life."