The Fine print in the age of Electronic Reproduction.

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Project Description

The tradition of the 'fine print' is a long and complex association of silver gelatin photographic technology, aesthetic styles and production techniques. Originating in the United States of America in the early 20 th century. It championed a straight photographic approach acknowledging the unique qualities of the silver gelatin photographic print, and was positioned in sharp contrast to other photographic traditions such as Pictorialism whose practices and aesthetic tended to subdue the image's inherent photographic qualities in favour of creating prints that more closely resembled the appearance of etchings, paintings or drawings.

The 1990's were a period of rapid change where the basis of photographic production started to shift away from its traditional chemical/optical processes towards electronic production. By the end of the decade major photographic manufacturers like Kodak had begun to significantly decrease their range of stock photographic items (films, papers, chemicals and accessories), to begin replacing them with electronic processes and materials.

The aim of this project was to investigate if monochrome prints can be produced by digital CMYK inkjet printers that equal or surpass the quality of existing fine silver gelatin prints, and to thereby assess the impact of these electronic technologies on the tradition of the 'fine print'.
In the studio a number of original prints were produced by both methods (silver gelatin and CMYK inkjet) and their qualities compared and evaluated relative to the tradition of the fine silver gelatin print. The objective was to produce a set of exhibition quality prints that highlight and contrast the similarities and/or differences between these production methods. In particular the research focused on the potential role or contribution of the CMYK inkjet print to the tradition of the fine print. The research utilised the resources of my own studio and the RMIT Media Arts course area.

Software
Analog
Sterling Fortezo Museum weight paper developed in "Ansco 120" for 2 minutes at 20° Celsius.

Kodak T-max Film Developed in D25 at 24° Celsius, development time was determined by the subject brightness range of the scene photographed.
Digital
This project used a variety of software applications.
Live Picture™ Version 2.5 and 2.6.
This software has several advantages over more traditional pixel editing packages [like Adobe Photoshop™]. It is more responsive and intuitive. It operates internally at a higher bit depth, and allows for in infinite number of undo's which can be saved and reused at any time.

Adobe Photoshop™
Used for dust and scratch removal.

Silverfast™
A post scanner package that processes HDR scans on a remote computer thus eliminating scanner operator error.

iCC
Colour profiles were compared using the shareware program iCC 2d viewer.

Colorblind Matchbox
Colour profiles for monitors and output devices were created using ColorBlind Matchbox software.
Scanning
All negatives were scanned with a Flextight Scanner as High Dynamic Range [HDR] scans and later processed using Silverfast™ Software on my computer at home. A HDR scan involves scanning an image at a bit depth of 16 bits per channel, and a gamma of 1.0 allowing the maximum possible amount of information to be captured at the time of scanning. This data is a then archived and is able to be reprocessed numerous times from this archive, allowing further creative options.

Hardware
Analog
Linhof Technika V 5" x 4" format .
180 mm Rodenstock Sironar-N Lens.
Pentax Digital Spotmeter.
Manfrotto Tripod.
Omega "D" Enlarger
150 mm Rodenstock Lens
Zone VI Compensating Metronome.
Zone VI Developer timer.
Digital
My hardware configuration consisted of the following;-
Apple Macintosh™ G3 233MHZ, 196 meg RAM 20 G Hard Drive [this was partitioned into two 10G partitions with 2 different Macintosh™ operating systems [8.1 and 9.2] to allow the special requirements necessary to operate Live Picture™ smoothly and keep Photoshop™ installed]

A Wacom™ drawing tablet to make the editing process more brush like and intuitive.

Desktop printers made by Epson™ [1270, 2000p] These printers were chosen as Epson was the first to introduce the 6 colour printing process, as well as Archival pigment sets for their printers. [In fact the release of the original Epson printers were the beginning point of my investigations on this subject over 3 years ago. These printers were such a leap forward that I did indeed wonder if this meant that I could pack up my Darkroom.]

The large format printers at R.M.I.T were used to create the final exhibition pieces.

Colour management
One of the key attributes of a fine print is it's print colour[1]. Bruce Fraser has defined a colour space that is reasonably perceptually uniform compared to Adobe RGB from which it's derived [see right] and was used for this project.[2]

Several calibration issues needed to be addressed. The colour space of the monitor, the calibration of the monitor and the matching the print output to the screen. All these issues can be fairly simply dealt with, from a variety of approaches, some as a simple as doing test strips just as one would in an analog environment, or purchasing specific software to create the necessary profiles needed to bring the whole system together. I used the later,
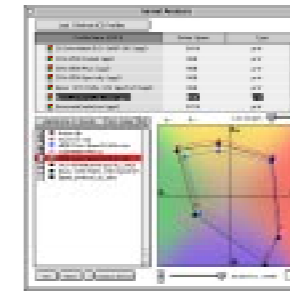
the icc 2d viewer interface
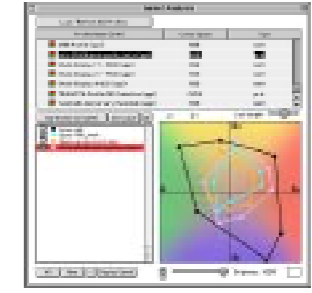
a comparison of various printer profiles in relation to bruce RGB the working monitor space for this project
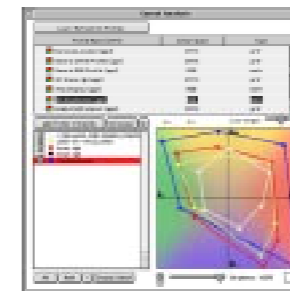
a comparison of various printer profiles in relation to Joseph Holmes Ektacolour monitor space .

Live Picture 2.5 splash screen.

1. See the table on page number 8 for a more detailed outline of fine print characteristics

2. Software for creating and editing profiles has been in existence for many years. This software continues to improve in quality and escalate in price, entry level software while affordable from the average user does not allow the degree of control that more professional software packages allow.

Calibrating my monitor using Colorblind, software and shareware and creating several profiles for each printer on Epson's standard archival matt paper. This paper was chosen as it is considered one of the few archival papers on the market.

Live Picture's™ colour management, is very simple and straight forward. Simply load the printer profile, edit>colour> and then turn on soft proofing, view>softproof. This enables you to get a fairly accurate rendition of the final out come on the screen prior to printing.

Print Characteristics

The Characteristics of Analog Prints
The Artist whose work was chosen to be examined as fine prints was, Paul Strand. In "The History of Photography"[3] by Beaumont Newhall he figures largely, there are several pages of his alone in the chapter on "Straight Photography"[4]. Ansel Adams is often considered the main protagonist of the fine print, however there have been throughout the history of photography many other photographers who used the fine print as an expressive medium. Some of these artists were,

Frederick Sommer
Edward Steichen
Alfred Steiglitz
Minor White
Paul Strand
Edward Weston
Paul Capringro
Claris Sheeler
Ansel Adams

Paul Strand's "vintage" portfolio is one of the few the N.G.V. has in their collection. Paul Strand however has two portfolio's in the collection and as he is often cited as an influence on Ansel Adams, his work seemed a good choice. Of the two portfolios examined, the actual images chosen were, "Toadstool and Grasses"
Maine 1928 [Silver Gelatin 8 x 10 contact print]

"Akeley Motion Picture Camera"
NYC 1923 [Silver Gelatin 8 x 10 contact print]

"Toadstool and Grasses" is printed on a Matt surfaced warm tone fibre based paper. It is free from blemishes, and it's depth of field is sharp through out. The tonal scale is not evenly distributed from the shadow values to the highlights. The whole image seems to have predominance of values at the bottom end of the scale and at the top end with very little in between. There is a luminous quality about the print as if a glow emanates from within the print. The rendering of the highlights is soft without appearing mushy, detailed without appearing overly contrasty. The shadows are dark yet have detail within them.

"Akeley Motion Picture Camera" is one of Strand's most famous images. Strand's work is often cited as being a major beginning influence on Ansel Adams who is well known for his enthusiasm for "fine prints". Again this image has no apparent blemishes, and is printed on Matt fibre based paper, this time however the paper is cooler in tone, the print also displays a fuller range of tones compared to the Toadstool image. The tones displayed were

a complete set from Zone 2 [black with the first hint of detail], to Zone 8 [white with complete detail].

Ansel Adams attempts to define a fine print on page 3 in his book "The Print"[6], his list[7] is similar to mine. After studying numerous prints, I noticed a list of characteristics that could be applied to these prints. Those characteristics were,
·Photographic in appearance.
·Full tonal scale.
·Detail in all blacks and whites.
·Luminosity, light "appears" to emanate from the print.
·No unintentional optical aberrations such as flare.
·No unintentional dust, scratches or imperfections.
·Appropriate paper surface for intention.
·Print colour used as an expressive component.
·Tonal and spatial relationships, are subtly rendered to accentuate/ emphasise space and depth.
·Figure ground relationship is created using tonality, colour, local contrast.

The Characteristics of Inkjet prints
Currently there are three major photographic paper manufacturers world wide, Kodak, Agfa, Ilford, as well as a handful of small boutique papers available to aid experimentation with silver gelatin papers. Given that people like Strand and Adams had a huge array of paper surfaces and types to choose from[6,] this limit makes it difficult to compare to the current list of materials available to the contemporary fine printer.

Inkjet papers on the other hand are not only produced by the three major Photography companies, but each inkjet printer manufacturer, and a whole slew of other companies are all competing for the consumer's dollar. I then decided to limit my choices based on such qualities as archival permanence, surface and specifications such as paper brightness. The options here are so vast, [any material that will accept ink can be printed on] I decided to stay with paper as a medium.

Print colour.
The infinite amount of manipulation available in most software packages, combined with the large array of choices available in Inkjet Media, makes this issue difficult to clarify.

Print surface.
The large amount of choices available in Inkjet Media, makes this issue also difficult to clarify. It was for these reasons that I chose to concentrate on Epson's standard archival papers. Epson are seen as the leader in this field being the first to introduce several innovative features such as 6 colour printers and piezography delivery .

Archival properties.
Pigment based inks are the only archival inks available, and only if the images are printed on archival paper will any company guarantee any level of archival stability.
The website http://www.wilhelm.com is constantly testing archival properties of papers and manufacturers claims. [August 2001]

3 **The History of Photography** by Beaumont Newhall. pub The Museum of Modern Art New York

4 ibid pages 167 - 197

5 **The Print,** by Ansel Adams, pub by Little Brown & Co. 1983

6 The actual definition is, "A fine print has generally been assumed to have a full range of values, clear delineation of form and texture, and a satisfactory print"color." "The Print, by Ansel Adams, pub by Little Brown & Co. 1983, page 3

7 **The British Journal Photographic Alamnac 1957** lists, 10 Photographic Companies producing papers, one company, Mason's, has 24 papers available, Kodak 19, Gevaert 22 surfaces and 33 Varieties, alone!.

8 **Darkroom Cookbook** Steve Anchell, pub Focal Press 1999

9 For a more in depth look at the process used by other Artists see **Darkroom 1 Darkroom 2 and Contact Theory,** all by Lustrum press

Methodology.

The Analog Process.
I began my research of analog processes by determining the components of a paper developer9 that determine the values most suited to fine printing. I then experimented with a series of papers and developers to attempt to match my list of elements that defined a fine print.

Essentially negatives are proof printed. Then a selection process is entered into, resulting in either further, proofs or small work prints. Followed by the final enlargement.10 I personally chose "ANSCO 120" a Metol based developer for it's soft developing properties, using it a either a dilution of 1+1 or 1+2, for 2 minutes at 20° C. The paper I finally decided on was Forté a chlorobromide graded paper manufactured in Europe.

Proof prints/Contact Prints.
A proof print or contact print is made. This is simply a small test to examine the neg and it's qualities, and to make any decision about the next step towards the work print. Issues that are examined at this stage are overall contrast, sharpness, spots or blemishes, and composition. Notes or printing maps maybe made/drawn at this point to plan out any future moves under the enlarger.
Time taken approximately 15 minutes.

Work prints
A small enlargement is made, usually about 8" x 10" inches. The first print will have little or no manipulation other than determining the best exposure for the highlights, and ensuring that the grade of paper is the best one for the negative. This is the only creative decision made at this point. Subsequent prints are then manipulated until a satisfactory out come is reached based on the criteria of, over all contrast, local contrast, ie burning and dodging and any of the other criteria listed earlier. The print may now be considered finished, [if a larger print is planned all the printing notes are filed away for reference at a later stage when the final sized print is to be made], post darkroom techniques may include toning of the print overall to manipulate tones and spatial relationships, bleaching of the highlights, for local contrast control. Again printing notes are made along with a printing map based on annotations on the back of the print, whilst the print is being made. This process often involves several sessions spanning a period of time that can last several months, and is part intuition, part craft based.
Time taken, minimum 1 hour onwards.

Finished prints.
Prints are considered finished when all the criteria for a "fine print" have been reached, such as a full tonal scale, the local contrast reaches an equilibrium, it is free from blemishes including creases, and has been archivally washed, and is ready to be mounted in a suitable presentation mount.

The Digital Process.
Scanning
All scans were completed at RMIT on the Flextight™ scanner.
Time taken approximately 20 minutes per image.

Manipulating
Printing inks were the equivalent of chemistry in this part of the process, different inksets were found that could produce different results, Epson's

inkset produced colour casts and jumps in tone throughout the image. A quad tone inkset by.... was capable of producing smoother tonal values, using carbon based inks, but were not capable of producing the subtle print colours that traditional papers, developers and toners are capable of producing. Images are then prepared by setting up "views". Live Picture™ needs to be told which areas are to be printed out and to speed zooming in and out of the image, in readiness for manipulation10. This is very useful for preparing an image for a variety of output sizes. The manipulating part of the process is open ended due to it's almost limitless possibilities. This is both a positive and negative of the digital process.

Once the views are set up, a screen proof is prepared. This involves adjusting levels so that the image appears at it's optimum on the screen. The comparative analogy here is Maximum Black minimum time in the dark room for contact prints11. The image is then worked in a way as to best describe the intentions at the time of exposure.

In Live Picture™, all work is brushed into the image via it's appropriate layer, each layer has a distinct and separate use. In the end the main layers I used were,

    Image insertion from Create on the menu bar
    Color Levels in the Layer, IVUE correction menu
    Color correction from Create on the menu bar
    Colorize from Create on the menu bar
    Sharpen/Blur from Create on the menu bar

Proof printing
Proof printing is not really necessary. All work can be done on screen and using the soft proofing feature in Live Picture™ the image can be previewed prior to printing and any adjustments needed can be made in advance.

Finished prints.
These prints are simply printed out to the finished size based on the "views" set up earlier. A unique feature of this software package is it's ability to output to a variety of sizes, from web graphic to billboard poster, from the same file.

Comparative analysis.
I created a greyscale [similar to the 21 step greyscale made by Kodak] to compare the output of a calibrated setup, [Monitor/Printer]. This image file was then printed out on several papers and settings to see if the printers could produce a continuous tone greyscale. It was not possible to produce a smooth continuous tone. Values on the greyscale were blocked and inconsistent in several places and in the case of the Epson 2000p™ badly so. The printers seem to radically alter the way that they handle the ink for the image around Zone III and Zone IV giving inconsistent tonal scales. Even with profiles created for each paper combination the greyscale printed out with a heavy magenta cast, unless colour was turned off in the printer settings dialog box, and then there is a noticeable "dither" pattern particularly in the zones above Zone V.

My approach to analog print comparisons was to make a print by printing the highlights correctly, then try to match the highlights of this print, with the corresponding prints on the variety of papers and developers that I'm using to compare it to. I used the same approach to compare Analog prints with Digital prints. With a small analog proof print in front of me I would manipulate the image on screen to attempt to emulate the analog print as

10 Live Picture Version 2 Manual page 72.

11 I observed that all my negatives levels adjustment was large often in the region of 20 levels of grey[suggesting underexposure, or under development]. Yet all the negatives used printed exceptionally well on Grade 2 paper in the darkroom. I suspect that digital printing may require a different approach to exposure compared to the analog darkroom. This will require further investigation

12 ColorBlind Edit", "ColorBlind Proveit".
    http://www.color.com/

best I could.

Prints were made in a variety of developers on a variety of papers and comparisons made between prints in areas such as, highlights, shadows, overall contrast and print colour.

The series of steps involved in preparing for the final exhibition, originally centred around colour calibration, and manipulation. I created monitor and printer profiles using a combination of PIC's software/hardware[12]. Once these were in place I began researching Live Picture's™ ability to "manipulate the print", with a small print in front of me on the computer. The first step in the digital manipulation stage was to correct the levels in the print and make sure that they were evenly distributed throughout the image. With soft proofing turned on in Live Picture™, this gives a fair indication of the image as a proof print. This was really the only consistent step taken throughout the manipulation stage of the project, as each image invariably required a different series of modifications to create a "fine print". One of the best features of Live Picture is the brushes. The brushes in Live picture are resolution independent and as a consequence of this they can be used to "brush in" an effect at the most minute level of pixels or across the entire image in one stroke.

Some of the manipulations undertaken were the digital equivalent of bleaching and reducing using the Colorize layer, either using the lighten or darken mode at a variety of opacities. Darken mode reduces print values and lighten mode intensifies print values.

The color correction layer was used to dodge and burn by painting a zone lighter or darker at a variety of opacities. I first selected the value I wished to change with the eye dropper, making a note of it's HSV value. I then inserted a color correction layer, and by clicking on the selective correction button, I then used the color correction dialog box to increase the values in the after section on the HSV sliders, [10% equalling a one Zone change, either lighter or darker].

The sharpen/blur layer was good for emphasising the local contrast in the image and adding a sense of depth to the image, by creating sharper or less sharp areas to the image.

Conclusion.

It appears that there are some trade offs that will need to be settled for in the future production of "digital fine Prints". As good quality silver gelatin papers become harder and harder to acquire, the shift towards digital processes and techniques seems inevitable. [See table on page 11]. Of course processes like platinum printing will continue for some time to come, as these techniques have long been a "hand made" process [a possible personal future direction]. In fact the output of digital negatives from image setters or even inkjet printers can actually add to this process. In the time this project has been undertaken there has been several models of Inkjet printers released by Epson alone, all of which have continued to improve on their predecessors. In time it may be possible to circumnavigate the current problems associated with contemporary inkjet printers.

I have created a table of the current problems that I see as being detrimental to the production of "digital fine prints" from inkjet printers. A brief list of which would include, lack of archival stability, difficulty in achieving a continuous tone, blocking of values and jumps in tones on a single greyscale, dithering in the lighter smooth tones. These may at some point in the not too distant future be corrected. The advantages of the computer in the darkroom are too important to ignore. The almost childlike application of programs such as Live Picture™ enable the artist to concentrate on the image before them and it's aesthetic issues rather than struggle with traditional darkroom/chemical/optical issues.

Table of, the positive and negative effects of Digital Imaging on the Fine print.

Positives.

Limitless options.
The limitless amount of options are exciting allowing an open ended approach to the production of beautiful prints.

Costs are reduced.
As no silver is used/manipulated in the process difficult techniques such as complex masking of shadows or highlights are easily achievable. This time consuming and expensive approach to the craft of the fine print is eliminated with digital imaging, all is done on screen, and save some testing with inks and papers no other time, effort or expense is needed.

No costly mistakes.
If a mistake is made, say bleaching a highlight, then it can be simply undone on the spot, or in the case of Live Picture™ it can be undone or re-applied at a different opacity, at a later stage after printing, then reprinted. This kind of mistake in the darkroom could cost hours or days. For example, "dry down" can be difficult to predict, or the application of bleach may be too heavy handed, or it's impact misjudged, also this may not be noticed until after the print is dry.

Ease of use.
Again some masking techniques in a traditional analog darkroom can take years to master and apply, [the hardware to achieve this often needs to be hand made, this equipment can be hard to find and expensive to purchase]. Once a program like Live Picture™ or Photoshop™ is understood enough then these kinds of techniques can be applied easily and quickly.

Callier Effect.
This effect well known in photographic circles. It is an effect whereby apparent contrast is increased as the enlarging of a negative gets bigger. No enlarging is involved with the digital process so any size image can be printed, with no changes in contrast.[15]

Materials availability.
Three main producers of silver gelatin papers have all discontinued their Graded papers, producing predominantly variable contrast papers. In fact it is now becoming increasingly difficult to purchase graded fibre based papers, even from boutique manufacturers like Forte. [Agfa have stopped production of what is considered by many to be the finest papers on the market, Portriga Rapid, and papers such as Forte have a 6 month wait for delivery in Australia.] Variable contrast papers have been seen to be slightly inferior to graded papers for many years, the quality is outstanding nowadays and Steve Anchell in his Multi contrast printing Manual suggests that these papers are now on par with their Graded cousins[17]. Silver Gelatin papers may now even disappear as manufacturers switch emphasis to digital papers. Three years ago the quality of output from computers using contemporary output devices was not considered satisfactory or it was beyond the realm of most home users, now that the level of quality has improved so dramatically in such a short time frame perhaps the quality of output will only get better. Some inkjet printers can print on any material up to thin aluminium, this also expands the possibilities of the print no end, and moves the reliance photographers have had on the three main companies to a myriad of options, in paper type surface colour texture and so on.

Negatives

Limitless options.
It makes it difficult to begin when the end is nowhere in sight.

Lack of History.
No "established" literature. Unlike the chemical optical processes that have a long history of written papers and established scientific research Digital imaging has a brief history making it difficult to acquire knowledge[14].

Colour Management.
Colour management is crucial to the production of a "fine print" yet the profiles provided by the printing companies were often inadequate, which means creating/manipulating your own is the only way to gain any control over this part of the process, adding to costs in time effort, software and hardware.

Software upgrades.
The chemical optical process has stayed relatively the same for nearly 150 years, however software manufacturers are bringing out new versions of their software every 18 months or so. This adds to the learning curve process and given the lack of historical material available at this point makes it difficult to find answers.

Hardware upgrades.
Hardware manufacturers, are upgrading equipment at an even higher rate than software developers, adding to the costs of running an efficient studio. This also adds the maintenance of computers to the studio which may require a specialised set of tools/skills, that have nothing to with art, photography or general image making.

Exposure and Development of Negative Materials.
It appears that optimum exposure for enlarging negatives on to contemporary papers is vastly different to that of the exposure needed to produce digital files. This means one may have to decide to either double up on exposures of film, one for digital one for analog, or completely abandon one method of print making, for the other. [This is a possible area for further research.]

Lack of Archival Stability
According to Wilhelm research, currently the only printer/pigment/paper combination that is "archival" is the Epson 2000p used in conjunction with Epson's Archival Matt Papers[16]. This printer/paper combination produced an even more uneven 16 bit greyscale than the 1270/Epson Matt Paper combination.

Distribution of Inks, Inconsistent
The dither pattern used to create tones throughout the image is made apparent in particular areas, such as smooth continuous tones in areas like sky or smooth water. The flip side is that this effect is masked in areas with lots of edges and detail such as leaves and grasses. With small gamut inks still in development these issues may become irrelevant.

14 See the opening chapter of "The Darkroom Cookbook" by Steve Anchell for an eloquent plea for the better understanding of the chemical processes in photography and for the preservation of these processes.

15 For a more in depth discussion about this effect, see, Ansel Adams, "The Print" Pages 19-21 and Langford's "Basic Photography" pg 240.

16 http://www.wilhelm-research.com/
When displayed framed under glass, all of these prints are rated at greater than 100 years before noticeable fading occurs. These prints also are expected to have very good humidity-fastness behaviour.

17 Multi Contrast printing Manual, by Steve Anchell, pub Focal press 1998. Steve Anchell's introductory chapter talks about the history of Multi-graded papers, and extols the virtues of the then current crop of these papers.

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Random thoughts, notes, quotes.

05-07-2000

E Weston on Printing and Papers.

"...avoid papers of independently beautiful surface quality since such an element would conflict with the photographic beauty he is striving to present - for his purpose the paper surface and the image must become one inseparable unit;

Second he will choose a paper with the largest possible scale that is, one that can reproduce most from his negative, and thus retain more fully his original intention;

Third he will chose a paper that reflects light, in preference to one that absorbs it; for this characteristic, by duplicating on a small scale the visibility - mechanism of the original scene, enhances the sensation of reality."

"E Weston on Photography"
ED. Peter C Burrnell
Peregrine Smith books 1983, pg 155

Paper surface one of several defining factors in "fine prints?"

Arnold Gassan, on printing.
"The art of printing can be a discovery of vision. This vision can be carried back into the process of photography. The process may yield an illusionistic image or print which has value as an object"

"A Handbook for contemporary photography"
By Arnold Gassan 3rd edition 1974
Light impressions.

Value as an object????? What gives an object value? Are these properties as an object measurable?

Twin Conditions
"Images about images
Thinking about thinking"
F.S.

"As making of photographs became easy, and as this fact came to be understood, attention shifted from the craft to content"

"Mirrors & Windows, American photography since 1960"
by John Szarkowski.
MOMA 1978

"modern works of art were to be judged according to their coherence as art rather than by their correspondence to nature"

"Frederick Sommer selected texts and bibliography" pg 4
Ed by Sheryl Conkleton
CLIO press 1995

At this point it seems that very little is written about print qualities, more about content, and subject matter in a theoretical framework, depending on the critics agenda, (political or other wise). This will require my careful and close study of the appropriate prints in real life.

My list of print qualities June / July 2000
Photographic in appearance(?)
Full tonal scale.
No empty blacks or whites.
Luminosity, (light "appears" to emanate from the print).
No unintentional optical aberrations such as flare.
No unintentional dust, scratches or imperfections.
Appropriate paper surface for intention.
Print colour?
Tonal and spatial relationships
Figure ground relationship, does it exist, is it part of the image?

First scans from flextight indicate a "condenser enlarger" look and feel!

Is content an issue in fine prints?

What are the origins of the fine print tradition? Was it Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, who started it, is there a singular point in time where this came into being?

08-07-2000

The origins of the fine print are difficult to pinpoint, particularly if one is to differentiate between, the "straight" print and the "fine" print. Ansel Adams and the f64 group are attributed with approach that "celebrated" the photographic qualities of the print. This at a time when artists and photographers were attempting to raise photography to the level of contemporary art as an object, by mimicking painting. So when did the straight and the fine part ways, did they ever part ways are they one and the same or something altogether different? Are their qualities interchangeable, or not? Some of the other difficulties of defining a "fine" print are that often the intention of the artist may have been photographic or more than photographic. For example Frederick Sommers work was often overlooked in Histories of photography because of subject matter and his treatment of it, which was photographic in it's nature but not in it's intention.

At last am starting to feel like I am "coping" with LIVE PICTURE! The basic concepts have now sunk in and I guess now it's just up to me to "apply" them to some good images.

09-07-2000

Arnold Gassan's beginners list of print qualities,(he calls it terms of craft comparison, which is a beginning point for photographic print criticism)
clarity of whites
richness of blacks
liveliness of intermediate grey tones
evenness of tone (agitation and development)

suitability of grain for image
absence of mechanical blemishes
suitability of paper surface, contrast grade and colour
adequacy of mounting and finishing

Gassan on Steichen and print qualities:-
"The special name given to the metaphoric possibility of the
photograph - which exists because the viewer of the carefully made,
straight print is torn between the knowledge that this visual trickery,
a magical reality, the concurrent desire to believe, the knowledge
that it is only a print, and the great power of it's verisimilitude - was
equivalent"

 fin for contemporary photography 4th edition, pg 86

Gassan on Pictorialism and the function of photographic images:
"The pictorial mode did not disappear in one sense. This is a
continuing concern for the beautiful print, the picture whose subject
is its own shapes. There was and is a fundamental split in
photographic values related to the use of the photograph. One side
argues the photograph is a vehicle of communication about the
world, that the medium is best used to speak of man's condition.
The other side insists that the photograph is a print making process,
and the product is an externalisation of an artist's inward directed
vision. Both sides have heroes that are rushed to the ramparts."

handbook for contemporary photography 4th edition, pg 86

"...revealed a world I had never seen, though it lay all about:
Weston, Adams, Renger-Patzsch: each presented different though
overlapping visions, and each utilised the severe disciplines of
straight photography, i.e. photographs which honoured the unique
abilities of the camera and used only what the camera provided."
A Gasson on www.AGdigital.com

25-07-2000

Spent a couple of hours at NGV today, very disappointed in what I
saw?? List of photographers artists includes, Ansel Adams Aaron
Siskind, Olive Cotton, Paul Capronigro, Edward Weston, Wyn
Bullock. The problem is going to be to find non-edition or portfolio
prints, as a large edition of prints is rarely if at all printed as well as
it could. I just know the one exception would be FS, as he would, I
guess, never had printed a "portfolio".24-08-2000
24-08-2000
Have discovered the CCP in Arizona, will begin investigating options
to travel and study. Also have downloaded some pdf's of catalogues
etc for a grant application and general research. Am investigating
options for grants etc will meet with LW on Friday to take this
further.

"A fine print is the culmination of a complex sequence which begins
with the recognition of the visual event. To produce such a print,
the photographer must make a negative that is properly exposed in
relation to the pre-visualised image.
...This sense of fine, almost unseen, detail and clarity allows the
viewer to experience subtle differences in reality. Each viewer brings
to the photograph their own personal sensitivities and the "fine
print" allows the viewer to more easily intuit the connections
existing between the viewer, the photographer and the photograph"
Gordon Hutchins
pg 7
"The Book of Pyro "
Bitter Dog Press
1992

25-08-2000
Post LW reflections.
Will contact the NGV for info about prints in their collection.
Opening sentence of written part of research will go something like:-
At the end of WW II attitudes to photography and it's craft were
changing and rapidly.
During the war research in several areas meant that changes to the
craft that were previously not thought possible nor thought of before
were brought into play, the whole experience in fact awoke the
American population in particular. They, the Americans were forced
to face themselves more closely after the horrors of WW II. This was
reflected in the direction and nature of art photography and the
journals of the time, the changes between the 1934 American
Journal of Photography, and the 1944 edition are profound and it is
about this time that the idea of a "fine print" became possible.
Prior to 1944 even Ansel Adams was not talking about the "fine
print"