

# Studio Photography

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product review

TEXT AND IMAGES BY RANDY HUFFORD

## Finishing Canvas and Fine Art Prints PremierArt's Print Shield Family Has the Solution

Digital printing has enabled me to make images I never thought possible a few years ago. The advantages of digital output are numerous, however, one critical part of the printing process is rarely discussed: the problems of print finishing.

Inkjet prints present a unique challenge to photographers. Although pigment-based inks are more lightfast than silver-halide prints, they are much more susceptible to damage than their silver-halide predecessors. Humidity, ozone, fingerprints, and other foreign substances are still harmful to inkjet prints. Think of an inkjet paper as a sponge; sealing this sponge is key to a long-lasting print. Canvas prints and paper prints are generally displayed differently, so their finishing solutions are also different.

### SOLUTION FOR CANVAS PRINTS

Varnishes have been used for centuries, but are incompatible with inkjet prints. We had tried numerous commercially available products with poor results—horrible odors and canvas that cracked when stretched—then we found a new product, PremierArt's Eco Print Shield, a water-based coating designed specifically for Premier's inkjet canvas.

Noticing that Eco Print Shield had no offensive odor, we moved on to our four other requirements in a coating: flexibility (no cracking when stretched), no yellowing, waterproof, and no fading.

For the cracking test, we let the coating dry, creased the canvas, and there was no cracking as long as sufficient coating was applied. The Eco Print Shield cross-links into the inkjet receiver layer, eliminating that unacceptable cracking when the canvas is stretched!

To test moisture resistance, we started with a water pool on the surface; it never penetrated the canvas. Feeling mischievous, we spilled red wine on the coated canvas and let it sit for 24 hours. The dried wine wiped up with NO STAIN.

At Limited Editions Maui, we have tropical sun at 2,500 feet above sea level. To test for yellowing and fading, I built a box, mounted it on the roof, and put in coated samples of canvas. After a year, there was no yellowing and no noticeable fading of the image.

We were ecstatic. A non-yellowing, non-cracking, waterproof coating that did not smell! Wilhelm Imaging Research confirmed our yellowing and lightfast tests. The result: a complete solution specifically for inkjet printed canvas.

The best part is that application is very easy. The coating can be applied with a high-density foam roller, available in The Home Depot paint section. Alternatively, spraying with an HVLP gun is very easy. Generally three coats are needed when spraying, while two are fine when coatings are rolled on. Eco Print Shield comes in a gloss, satin, and matte finish. Mix surfaces to create your own sheen level!

### SOLUTIONS FOR PAPER PRINTS

Traditionally, fine art prints are displayed under glass, so a protective coating is not required. Our fine art prints are on cotton papers with matte black ink. Since this combination is susceptible to scuffing in the studio and at the framer's, we were looking for a protective spray to seal the print without changing the appearance of the surface texture.

PremierArt's Print Shield has a low dissolved solids formula that does not change the surface



texture of prints, yet it protects them from scuffing, fingerprints, and moisture. Wilhelm has certified Print Shield, in fact, their numbers indicate Print Shield can double the life of a print. The spray actually eliminates bronzing and gloss differential, so I can finally display my images without hiding them under glass!

It's reassuring to know my sealed Gallery Wrapped stretched canvas and fine art prints will last for generations. ◆



RANDY HUFFORD, founder of the Institute of Visual Arts ([www.visualimpact.org](http://www.visualimpact.org)), on Maui, is a digital print master and photographic artist with 30 years' experience operating a custom photo lab and art reproduction house. Hufford leads workshops and consults on digital workflow topics. Clients include Mercedes Benz, *Time*, Sheraton Hotels, Hyatt Regency Hotels, Marriott Hotels, Ritz Carlton, Kobe Steakhouse, and Maui Jim Sunglasses.