

ARTISTIC INTEGRITY AND EPSON COLOUR BRILLIANCE

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CASE STUDY

LARGE FORMAT PRINTERS



Tim Hixson Photography



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Tim Hixson Photography

Tim Hixson is well known as one of Australia's most innovative art photographers. In fact, in 2005 with an Epson photo print he was voted Top Art Photographer in *Capture* and *Australian Creative* magazines' Australia's Top Photographers Awards. Since 1998, Hixson has been re-exploring the use of Chinese-made plastic cameras that use a 6x6cm film. "When you use these cameras," he says, "you have to allow for some quite unpredictable results, such as light flare and colour fringing. My goal, though, is to bring those results right through to the final print.

Approximately 10 years ago, Hixson first started using Epson inkjet printers, with the introduction to the Australian market of the Epson Stylus Color 3000. Ever since then he and a group of photographer colleagues who work in a Sydney-based co-operative environment, have remained committed to the Epson Stylus Pro family of products. A commitment that has led to the purchase of a Stylus Pro 7600, 4000, 4800 and Stylus Photo 2100.

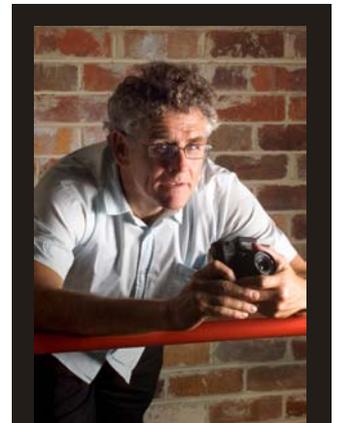
The Importance of black

One of the most unique features of Hixson's plastic camera photography is a gradual fade-to-black effect that results from the camera's curved plastic lens. "The centre point is focused and accurate," he explains, "and then the image fades out to black from that point. So when it comes to printing, it's essential that the inks accurately reflect the fading but *without* any noticeable colour staircasing."

In order to achieve the required colour range effect, Hixson remains a strong advocate of the Epson UltraChrome Ink set. A resin-coated pigment ink, UltraChrome Ink has been formulated to reproduce an enormously wide colour gamut. "What I see on the screen," Hixson says, "is precisely what I want to get on the print; and in my Stylus Photo 2100 and the Stylus Pro 7600, the use of Epson's UltraChrome ink gives me close to exactly that."

Hixson's demand for colour integrity applies just as much to black as it does to any other colour. With his style of photography resulting in a black vignette at all edges, it is the smooth gradation from white to black that he is able to achieve with the Stylus Pro 7600 that he regards as being a major point in the printer's favour.

"One of the underlying philosophies of my photography is to attempt to abstract a part of the world and have the viewer look into it," Hixson says. "In order to achieve this to maximum effect, I rely on a rich and strong black that I like with the UltraChrome light black and matte black inks in combination with matte paper."



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Maintaining process control

In commenting on his preference for digital printers as opposed to traditional film processing and printing, Hixson delivers an initial one-word response... "control".

"First of all, the Epson Stylus Pro printers give me an enormous range of stocks from which to choose," he further explains. "Everything from 100 per cent cotton-based canvas through to glossy photo paper - whichever I think is going to give me the best result.

"Added to that is the fact that when I purchase my cameras, I pull them apart and modify them to suit my own photographic style, shoot the photos in my own style, manipulate them on-screen, print and frame them myself. It's all about having totally artistic control over the entire process - from start to finish."

Among the many "process freedoms" Hixson gains through use of the Stylus Pro 7600 is the ability to modify print dimensions on-demand. "Using the roll paper, I'm able to make prints up to the full two-metre PhotoShop limit," he says. "And, of course, I can always print multiple PhotoShop files side-by-side in continuous form if needs be."

This ability to print in continuous form is important to Hixson's work and photographic expression.

"It gives me the format I need to tell simple photographic stories about the beach or whatever subject matter it is that I'm focusing on.

"Essentially, I have the freedom to concentrate on the finished product without any concern about dimension, colour or quality limitations."

The artist's integrity

For his exhibitions, including the recent and highly acclaimed *It Looks a Bit Sharkey Out There*, Hixson produces only limited editions of his works for sale, with most having a maximum print run of only 25.

In limiting the number of prints, Hixson has set out intentionally to provide purchasers of his work with an almost unique view of the world - and one that is guaranteed to retain its integrity.

"Print longevity is just as important to me as it is to the people who buy my prints," Hixson says. "With the genuine Epson UltraChrome ink and matte papers, I can virtually guarantee anyone who purchases one of my prints and stores them properly, that there will be absolutely *no* discernable fading during their lifetime...at least!

"This, along with the quality of the print I'm able to produce, means I'm retaining *my* integrity along with that of my photo prints."

