

# STEVEN MAYES' DIGITAL PRINTS

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IT STARTED WHEN I WAS ABOUT FIVE YEARS OLD as a kid in Los Angeles, trying to copy a print that I saw on a neighbor's wall. As summers passed, my desire to create increased in complexity – building paper mache rockets using shavings from matches as fuel, or a wooden gasoline-powered go-cart. By eighteen, the desire led me to start “making art.”

Developing my skills and learnings over the years, especially in art, has occupied me through the present. But creating art has always been intertwined with creating in general, leading to a ten-foot long wooden sailboat, a customized car with a high-powered engine, a two-seat wooden airplane, plus two garages and several remodeled homes.

As an art student at university, my primary focus was printmaking (etching and lithography) until 1958, when an exhibition of works by West Coast printmaker Glen Alps (inventor of the “collograph,” an image printed from a collage) was exhibited at my university in Wichita, Kansas. This exhibition was pivotal as it helped me understand my broader interest in creating – an interest in structures, detail and textures – and formed my style as a printmaker.

After completing my MFA degree at Wichita State University, I started my career teaching art at four different colleges and universities for thirty-six years until retirement in the Fall of 2002.

During the early 1980s, I added digital printmaking as an art form to my repertoire. However, computer-printed works weren't feasible at the time. Not only were pixel resolutions limited, but inks and paper were not archival quality and would fade or degrade making them poor substitutes for “fine art.”

My solution was to photograph an image that I created directly from the 512 x 512-pixel color screen of a graphics terminal, enlarge the image with a process camera, transfer the image to a light sensitive transparent film, then on to a light sensitive metal plate. I would then etch the image on the plate and print it as one would an intaglio print. As a result of this pioneering early work, I was invited to join an exhibition titled: “High Tech/High Touch: Computer Graphics in Printmaking,” at the Pratt Institute in New York City.

Today's digital artists have the luxury of archival inks and paper that will last for two hundred years or longer, making digital prints worthwhile as collections. The works on display here at Clare Hall utilize these archival materials, but also contain the collective history of my desire to create.