

Fine Art Photography — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a working fine-art practice. Each section maps to a course module: you will develop a concept and a cohesive series, lock in an archival printing workflow, structure and document limited editions with a defensible price ladder, and put the work in front of galleries, fairs, and collectors. Fill the worksheets, logs, and templates as you go so that within ninety days you have one finished series, a tested archival print with a certificate of authenticity, a published price list, and a real plan to reach buyers.

From Pictures to a Concept-Driven Body of Work

Define a genuine concept, shape a cohesive series, and write the statement, bio, and project text the art world expects.

Worksheet: Concept and Series Definition Sheet

Turn an interest into a fine-art project. Look for a recurring thread in your strongest existing frames, then name the project, phrase its idea, and set a constraint so the body of work reads as one voice.

Recurring thread I keep returning to (subject / place / mood / light)

Project working title

Concept as a question or statement (one sentence)

Why this matters to me (one honest sentence)

Constraint to focus the work (one location / one process / one palette / one time of day)

Consistent visual language (palette, light, framing, treatment)

Target number of final images (aim 12-20)

Frames I already have that fit, and gaps still to shoot

Exercise: Fine Art vs Other Lanes Drill

Sharpen your sense of intent. Take three of your own images and judge each against the four pillars curators look for, then decide honestly which are fine art and which are something else.

- For each image, what is the concept (the idea, question, or emotion in one sentence)?

- Do the three images cohere into one voice, or are they an unrelated sampler?

- Where does the craft (technique and intended printing) serve the concept, and where is it accidental?
- Which of these is genuinely fine art, and which is documentary, commercial, or decorative, and why?

Worksheet: Artist Statement, Bio, and Project Text Builder

Draft the texts every gallery and open call will ask for. Write in plain language a smart friend would understand; cut any sentence you could not say out loud without cringing.

Statement opening line (what the work is about, plainly)

Why I make it (one sentence of honest motivation)

Approach in concrete terms (medium, process, method)

Full artist statement draft (100-300 words)

Short artist bio (third person, 50-150 words: who, where, focus, real highlights)

Project description (context and intent for this one series)

One-line elevator version of my practice

Image list line format (title, year, medium, dimensions, edition)

Checklist: Body-of-Work Readiness Check

- Concept can be stated in one clear sentence
- Series has a real title and a defined size target
- Images share one consistent visual language
- A constraint is imposed to focus the work
- Weak or off-thread frames have been cut from the edit
- Artist statement is jargon-free and a non-specialist could follow it
- Bio is factual, current, and free of boasting
- Image list with titles, year, medium, and dimensions is drafted

Archival Limited-Edition Printing

Calibrate and soft proof, choose archival paper and pigment process, and finish prints to museum standards.

Worksheet: Color-Managed Print Workflow Sheet

Document your print chain so results are repeatable. Fill this once your monitor is calibrated and you have the right paper profile, and reuse it for every edition print.

Monitor calibration device and date (e.g. Calibrite / Datacolor)

Calibration targets used (brightness ~120 cd/m², white point 6500K, gamma 2.2)

Editing color space (Adobe RGB / ProPhoto RGB)

Printer, ink set, and paper combination

ICC paper profile used (maker download / custom)

Rendering intent chosen (Perceptual / Relative Colorimetric)

Soft-proof adjustments made (brightness lift, contrast, gamut-warning fixes)

Print-viewing light source (D50 / D65, ~5000-6500K)

Exercise: Screen-to-Print Match Test

Stop wasting paper on guesswork. Calibrate your monitor, soft proof one image through your paper profile, make a proof-copy edit, then print and compare under neutral light.

- Before calibrating, was your screen too bright (were you editing too dark)? What brightness did you settle on?
 - What did soft proofing reveal about shadows, contrast, or out-of-gamut colors on this paper?
 - What proof-copy adjustments (brightness, contrast, saturation) made the print match the screen?
 - Under neutral viewing light, how close is the print now, and what note will you save to reproduce it?
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Worksheet: Paper and Process Selection Sheet

Choose materials as an artistic decision, not just a supply order. Match the surface and process to the look of your series, and confirm it meets archival standards.

Series look I am after (painterly matte / rich glossy black / hand-made texture)

Paper type chosen (cotton rag matte / baryta fiber / other) and product name

Paper weight (gsm) and whether it is acid-free / lignin-free

OBA status (OBA-free vs brightened) and why that is acceptable for this work

Print process (pigment inkjet / gelatin silver / C-type / alternative)

Expected Dmax / black depth suitability for this image

Longevity expectation (display-permanence rating, framed under glass)

Test result: does this paper serve the concept, or try another?

Checklist: Archival Finishing Check

- Print handled by edges with clean cotton gloves
- Print allowed to outgas at least 24 hours before sleeving or framing
- Acid-free, lignin-free mat board and backing used
- Print hinged (not glued) with archival tape or photo corners
- Window mat or spacer keeps the print off the glazing
- UV-protective glazing (museum glass or acrylic) in place
- Signed and numbered consistently in the margin
- Stored flat in an archival box, interleaved, out of light and damp

Editions, Authenticity, and Pricing

Structure limited editions, document each print with a certificate and ledger, and build a consistent, rising price ladder.

Worksheet: Edition Structure Sheet

Decide the scarcity of your work before you sell the first print. Set edition sizes per print size and your artist-proof policy, and commit to honoring the caps absolutely.

Image title

Print size A and edition cap (e.g. 12x18 in, edition of 25)

Print size B and edition cap (e.g. 24x36 in, edition of 10)

Print size C and edition cap (e.g. 40x60 in, edition of 5)

Number of artist proofs (AP) per size (cap ~10% of edition)

Total prints that will ever exist across all sizes (including APs)

Open-edition / print-on-demand version policy (separate, lower tier?)

My written commitment to never reprint a sold-out edition at that size

Worksheet: Certificate of Authenticity Template Fields

Build the COA you will issue with every limited-edition print. Fill the standard fields so each certificate uniquely identifies one print within its edition.

Artist name and work title

Year image made / year print produced

Edition number and total (e.g. 3 of 15) and any AP designation

Exact medium and materials (e.g. archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm)

Print dimensions (image size / paper size) and where it is signed

Unique COA / catalog number and date of issue

Anti-fraud measure (embossed seal / hologram / verso mark)

Verification contact or website

Exercise: Pricing Ladder Build

Set defensible, consistent prices that can only rise. Work out your true cost floor, build a size-based ladder, and confirm it survives a gallery commission.

- What is your true cost per print (paper, ink, mounting, frame, packaging, fees) for each size?
 - What base price for the small size clears a healthy multiple of that floor, and how does the ladder scale up by size?
 - After a typical ~50% gallery commission, does each retail price still work, and do your direct prices match gallery prices?
 - What milestone (solo show, edition sell-through, strong demand) will trigger your next step-up, and by how much?
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Checklist: Editions and Provenance Check

- Edition caps set per size and documented before any sale
- Artist proofs counted within the total (e.g. 15 + 2 AP = 17 prints exist)
- Master edition ledger started (image, size, edition, COA no., buyer, date, price)
- COA issued and hand-signed at point of sale; a copy kept for the archive
- Open-edition and signed-edition tiers kept clearly separate
- Prices identical across website, fairs, and galleries
- Plan in place to raise prices only in steps, never to discount
- Records backed up digitally and on paper

Building a Fine-Art Market

Approach galleries and open calls, sell at fairs and exhibitions, and build a direct-sales practice and collector base that grows.

Worksheet: Submission Target and Package Sheet

Plan a realistic ladder into the art world. List the open calls, platforms, and galleries that already show work like yours, and assemble the package each one expects.

Three open calls / juried competitions that fit my work (with deadlines)

Online platform(s) to list and sell (e.g. Saatchi Art)

Local / co-op / university galleries to approach first

How each target's program matches my series (avoid mismatches and vanity galleries)

Cohesive image set selected (a series, not ten random bests)

Statement, bio, and CV of exhibitions attached

Image list with titles, year, medium, dimensions prepared

Personalized short message drafted per target, and follow-up date

Exercise: Exhibition or Fair Plan Drill

Prepare to put physical prints in front of buyers. Plan one show, fair booth, or open-studio event, curated tightly with consistent framing, clear pricing, and a way to capture leads.

- Which single cohesive series will you show, and how hard have you edited it for the wall?
 - What is your opening image and the path through the sequence, and how is everything framed consistently?
 - How will pricing and the edition story be shown (wall text, statement, printed price-and-edition list)?
 - How will you capture leads (guest book, mailing-list sign-up) from visitors who do not buy today?
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Worksheet: Direct Sales and Collector System Sheet

Own your audience. Set up the channels, tiers, and follow-up that turn a buyer into a repeat collector and keep a market growing around your work.

Portfolio site / storefront platform (Squarespace / Format / shop)

Mailing-list tool and where I will capture sign-ups (site, fairs, shows)

Pricing-ladder entry points (open print + book / small signed edition / large rare edition)

Inquiry path for higher-priced editions (inquire button + personal conversation)

Fulfillment standard (archival packing, tracked shipping, signed COA in package, follow-up)

What I will share to build trust (process, story, point of view) and where

Next series I will produce while selling the current one

Metrics I will track (editions, sales, collectors, costs, which channels convert)

Checklist: Go-to-Market Check

- Only targeting galleries and calls that already show work like mine
- Submission guidelines (formats, counts, naming, word limits) followed exactly
- Submitting a cohesive series with statement, bio, CV, and image list
- No vanity galleries that charge to hang work

- [] Physical prints shown somewhere real (fair, show, or open studio)
- [] A self-published book or zine made as a portable portfolio
- [] Portfolio site live with signed editions and an entry-tier offer
- [] Mailing list started and grown at every show, with regular updates

Your Action Plan

1. Define one concept-driven series: name it, phrase the idea in a sentence, set a constraint, and target 12-20 final images.
2. Edit your existing frames hard into that series and shoot deliberately to fill the gaps.
3. Write your artist statement, short bio, and project text in plain, jargon-free language, plus a one-line elevator version.
4. Calibrate your monitor, install the correct paper profile, and run a screen-to-print match test until a proof matches the screen.
5. Choose an archival paper and process that suit the series, and make one finished, signed, museum-mounted edition test print.
6. Set edition caps per size and create your certificate of authenticity and a master edition ledger before selling anything.
7. Build a consistent, cost-floor-checked price ladder that survives a 50% gallery commission, and publish one price list.
8. Assemble a submission package (series, statement, bio, CV, image list) and apply to at least three open calls or juried shows.
9. Plan one exhibition, fair booth, or open-studio showing of physical prints, framed consistently, with lead capture.
10. Launch a portfolio site with signed editions plus an entry-tier offer, start a mailing list, and announce your series to it.

