

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT & TECHNIQUE

**James Cooper** says of his work: "Remember when you were a child, how a simple little thing could galvanize your entire being – time stood still and you felt totally connected to the world – there was a feeling of total contentment. My desire would be to think that these images could produce that same experience."

The fact is that when one stands in front of one of Cooper's works, one wonders (in this era of computer graphics) if his images have been manipulated. The answer is no; they are un-manipulated. The artist states: "My position has always been that the image is the transparency film or print film image created by what the camera records. Hence, the process of producing an image includes only the camera and the film. And, for my work, the transparency film or print film should be manufactured to record as closely as possible what is rendered through the camera lens - no additional saturation dyes or other chemical enhancements." James continues: "While there is not always a moral imperative to present un-manipulated photographs, many people who are primarily interested in photography as an art form believe that knowledge of whether or not photographs have been manipulated is of critical importance when looking at and aesthetically appraising them - that un-manipulated images which faithfully represent what the photographer witnessed (saw) are aesthetically very different from images that were synthesized in the darkroom or in an image-editing program like Photoshop."

The artist obviously knows much about *Pigment Prints*. At a time when millions of homes and offices are equipped with inexpensive, high-quality printers linked to equally affordable computers and scanners, it is easy to forget that little more than a dozen years ago digital imaging and printing were still in their infancy. The prospect of a high-resolution fine art print that could rival traditional photographic printmaking in terms of aesthetic value and longevity was still a dream being pursued by only a handful of visionaries. Among those early digital pioneers were rock musician Graham Nash and friend and former Crosby, Stills, and Nash road manager R. Mac Holbert. Together, in 1991, the two founded Nash Editions, the first fine art digital print studio in the world. Conceived in 1989, Nash Editions is now widely recognized as the premier fine art digital print studio in the country. The extraordinary body of work produced at Nash Editions represents the entire spectrum of artistic involvement in digital imaging since the medium first became viable in the late 1980s, from highly manipulated images composed in the computer or on a digital scanner to straight photography that has been printed digitally from scans of the negative. After early skepticism, many artists - including, for example, David Hockney, whose experiments with photography and traditional fine art printmaking are well known, and Robert Heineken, who, among others, pioneered techniques that blurred distinctions between photography, painting, and other fine arts - have embraced the medium and are actively engaged in developing its potential.

James Cooper works exclusively with Nash Editions. The reason is no doubt found in co-founder Holbert's statement: "One of the misconceptions about this medium is that if you can buy the equipment, you're immediately a fine-art printmaker. There are reportedly some two hundred and fifty digital printmakers in the United States, but much of what we've seen wouldn't make it to our clients as a proof. The most important tool is still your own eye. You're going to be wrong almost every time if you allow the technology to make decisions for you."

The artist, taking us back to our childhood, concludes on his work: "If the images can produce that child-like experience, just for a split second, then maybe we can change just a little from the experience."

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