A New Generation *of* Traditional-Looking Digital Papers

by **Paul R. Schranz**

Pulp nonfiction: *New inkjet papers offer the look of glossy silver prints*

Digital photography has been around long enough that the newest generation of photographers may not have spent any time in a traditional darkroom. All they have ever experienced is inkjet printing. Those of us who made the transition to digital photography have learned that we can readily create smooth tonality without noticeable pixels in much the same way we produced grain-reduced prints with slow films and larger-format cameras. Those, like me, who spent 70% or more of their life in traditional photography may find it amusing that several companies now produce software that can add emulated film grain back into a digital print.

But what about the print itself? Back in the day, I knew very few silver-based photographers who ever printed on matte paper (outside of portraiture, anyhow). Now it seems like a majority of digital fine-art photographers are printing on some form of non-reflective, diffused matte surface. The industry's emphasis on quality matte surfaces and more commercial gloss surfaces is partially responsible for that change.

I don't miss the darkroom, but I do miss that traditional paper surface. One of my ongoing searches has been to find an equivalent of a traditional air-dried fiber paper with a little paper pulp surface in it for digital pigment output.

Black-and-white photos such as Barn and Ice *are well suited to the new papers.*

I realize that reading this article might be a bit frustrating because I can't actually illustrate in a magazine samples of what I'm talking about, but I will use familiar terms that accurately describe what I have found.

In the last two months, my search has yielded some rather surprising and delightful results. I did find a semi-gloss paper that has a nice sheen to it and no pronounced "tooth," and still yielded a rich, respectable Dmax black of 2.21. The paper is Intellicoat's Magiclee Siena 250 L, part of an extensive line under the Magiclee logo. This is a luster, premium resin-coated, microporous photobase that dries instantly.

This is both an excellent and inexpensive paper (17-inch by 90-foot roll is $54.99) that gives the finest of digital-looking surfaces and smooth tonal transition. Unlike papers that seem to have various densities of pigment ink sitting at plateaus on the surface (almost all high-gloss inkjet surfaces), Magiclee Siena has an almost imperceptible tex-

ture, making it a very nice digital paper. It is available in sheets and rolls.

ICC profiles are available free online. Canned manufacturers' profiles have become more credible now that the latest generations of printers are self-calibrating. This means that they keep their original manufacturing qualities, and printer drift—which causes canned profiles to lose accuracy after awhile—is no longer a concern.

I'm now using this paper for all of my proofing and commercial work. It's available from ProImaging Supplies at www.proimagingsupplies.com.

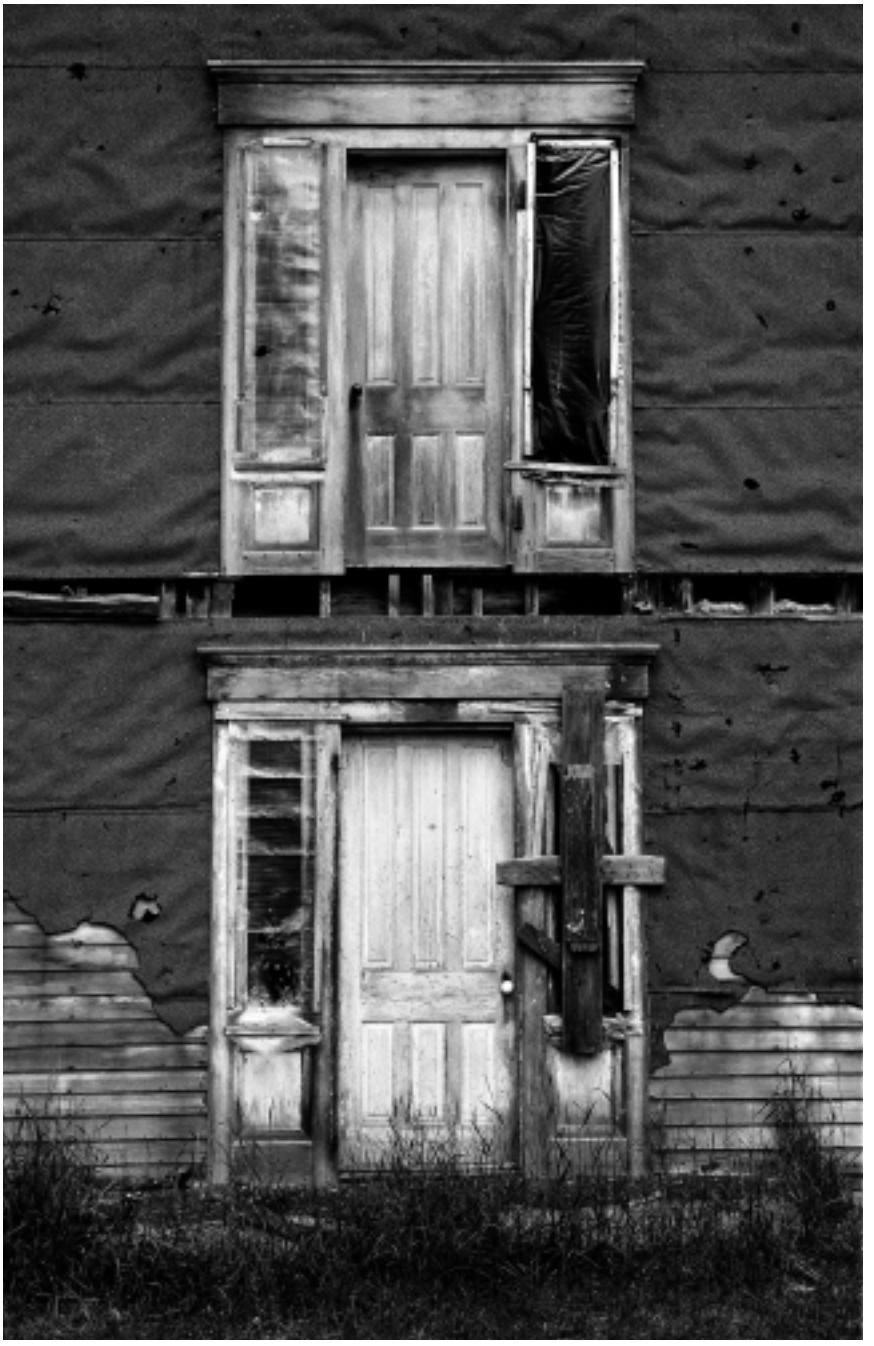
Digital silver

My second discovery was major. If you are looking for a digital photographic print that has all of the wonderful look and feel of an air-dried silver-based paper, it's been created and is now available. Moab Paper (Legion Papers) has come out with two papers in their new line called Colorado Fiber. Legion acquired Moab Paper in 2006.

"Fiber" is not just a look, it is real fiber. This paper is made from an alpha cellulose, neutral pH, acid-free paper. The two surfaces, Colorado Fiber Gloss and Colorado Fiber Satine, have a traditional silver-based look, complete with a fine paper texture. Both papers are 245 gsm in weight. The Fiber Gloss has more reflective sheen than the Fiber Satine, but they both give a luscious quality to pigment ink that I have not seen in any other paper surface. The paper even looks silver, and the inks look like they have penetrated the emulsion, rather than just being laid down on the surface.

In testing, I found the Dmax was 2.41 on the gloss and 2.12 on the Satine using a Canon iPF5000 pigment printer. Available in sheets and rolls, it is a bit pricey compared to other available papers—a 17-inch by 50-foot roll in either surface is $153.95—but it's worth every penny when quality is a concern. I haven't seen anything like it.

Moab ICC profiles are available. I suggest that you order either Moab's sample pack or a small quantity of each surface until you make up your mind which you prefer.



Double Doors, Wisconsin, *another candidate for the new inkjet papers.*

One note: You may have heard that the Moab Fiber Gloss had some curling issues in the first batch that caused the edges to get clipped a little on the sides of the printing head as it went back and forth. The last batch I received was absolutely flawless, and I've been assured that the problem has been fixed.

The Moab Colorado Fiber paper has become my printing paper of choice for all of my exhibition prints. I showed it to several colleagues who are still silver-based printers, and they had no idea that the prints were inkjet. That is how good this paper is. ■

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