

## Gary Wornell - a Skillful Artist.

Text and Pictures Timo Ripatti – Translated from the Finnish original by Natasha Wornell

I meet Gary Wornell at Riihimäki Art Museum just north of Helsinki at noon on a Monday in March. Art Museums and Galleries are normally closed on Mondays, but today the staff are at work. We have been given the opportunity to visit Gary's exhibition and photograph freely. The retrospective exhibition Circle of Passions' popularity has exceeded all expectations. We walk around the exhibition from one piece of work to another and I ask about the intention and techniques used to create them. Our conversation wanders from general interests to the individual and the exceptional. The name of the exhibition "Circle Of Passions" reflects Gary's profound grasp on making his art but also tells us about his career as an artist.

He started photography at the age of 14 as a high school photographer in Montreal and was then using a darkroom to develop his pictures. His move from Canada where he was born, to England, meant studying ceramics as his major and leaving photography to one side. Gary eventually moved to Finland in 1995 after working as a ceramic artist in England for 25 years. Finland inspired Gary to take up his photography again and with a background in craft techniques he started to create ways of printing on various materials.

### The circle began to close.

Pride of place in the Art Museum's main hall is what looks like a gigantic quilt. The piece "Crazy" stands at almost 5 meters. I focus on the piece that seems to be built from regular pieces that are fastened together with eyelets.

-Yes, they are eyelets and the pieces are a pretreated hand coated synthetic. You can print on any type of material. A finishing top coat ensures that the pigment ink is protected from UV and abrasion.

On the second floor of the exhibition there are pieces that look as if they were made of sheets of metal.

-I use sheet metal and aluminum a lot, because it allows me to choose the nature of the surface material. The printed surface is either covered in a matt white or clear pre-coat material. A clear coating allows the metallic base to show through.

-The printers are built to work with rectangular originals, and for example, Photoshop understands the images as rectangular. In my art I use freeform images, and printing on these has proved to be demanding and I have had to be inventive. You have to fool the printer and the image editing software, but in return I get a picture that has color printed over the edge. The metal doesn't shine on the matte coated surfaces. The colour wraps around the edge when viewed from the side even though the material is one or two millimeters thick. When the images are in place the ink doesn't spray beyond the metal more than three or four millimeters. The trick is to tape the printing material from the back on to the middle of a rectangular stencil, then measure the precise point to which the image is printed.

-When printing on to a thicker material you have to adjust the print head higher than normally. You can do this in the software on the computer. By doing this there is less risk of the print head touching the surface on which you are printing.

-You can also print on plastic film and transfer the image theme on to etching paper by a wet transfer method.

So you print on plastic and metal. How about fabric?

-I print on a material called Tyvek®, which is a product from DuPont. Usually you see it used as a protection material, used in building construction and renovation. It is a strong yarn linear polyethylene, and it is made to last. They use Tyvek to make work overalls and envelopes among other things. I was able to get a batch that didn't have logos printed all over it, like they have in the hardware stores.

-What I don't do is print on canvas and have the finished result look like an oil painting. That just simply isn't my style.

### **Alchemy in your own studio.**

Our next stop is Gary's studio in Riihimäki. In the biggest room stands a respectably big large-photo-printer which first brings to mind the mangle in the laundry room of an apartment building.

-This is an Epson Stylus PRO 9880 printer with a width of 44 inches i.e. 112 cm. This 8 colour model has now been superseded with the 9900 10 colour range but I have used this one when making almost all of the new pieces in the exhibition. People who visit my studio often wonder how one can make such big pieces in such a small space. By creating composite works I am able to make smaller components and assemble them into large works. I have two other Epson printers smaller than this one.

The image handling station i.e. a computer, a few monitors and a row of hard-drives is in the next room.

-Here I do all of the color control work. I handle the images using Photoshop but after that I use Qimage. Qimage is a colour managed printing application that allows me to get the colors to reproduce as accurate as possible. It has a lot of qualities that help to control the right color balance.

-For instance I can print the same image file on one sheet of paper as four images so that each image has a different profile. The program can also interpolate the image cleanly when printing large prints.

Gary lifts on to the table sheets that have hundreds of square-shaped color surfaces.

-Because I use various different printing materials, they all have a different effect on the inkjet-printers colors. This is why you must do a profile for the picture-printer-material-combination which will tell the program what it should do. I use Gretag Macbeth Eye1. It is a measuring system which enables me to get the information on how the colors and materials will react together from a test sheet. Once you measure the result a profile is created that adjusts the printer to deliver the correct amount of color when printing on the same material.

-Gretag's measuring system comes with a monitor calibration program which has its own measure. With the profile I can print any color scale on to any surface even if it isn't even meant to be a base for photographs.

We print a test sheet of four identical images with different profiles assigned to each one.

-These images are identical. In theory they are the same file. The difference is in the choice of print profile used for each image.

What about this alchemy department. You have a kitchen here with all kinds of jars.

-When you're printing on metal you have to do two things first. First you have to clean it properly. Usually there is dirt and grease on the surface but there is also a protection coating that you must remove thoroughly. I use acetone.

-Next you treat the metal with a substance called InkAID adhesive and precoat. This makes the ink stick to the surface well and gets the right tone. This really is the place for alchemy. I experimented with different chemicals that can be used on their own or with other commercial products. One of these chemicals is methylcellulose. It resembles old fashioned wallpaper paste.

-After the printing you have to protect the picture. Glamour II is one of the products I use for this. A treated print is scratch resistant and protected from the effects of ultraviolet light. Gloss varnish can also give more pop to the colors.

I would think that aluminum is a hard material to treat. Doesn't it oxidize as soon as it is cleaned?

-This is true. Nothing sticks to a oxidized surface properly. I coat the aluminum with an adhesive and the results have been really good.

Gary Wornell just won the LACDA (Los Angeles Center for Digital Art) 2009 'Top 40 International' Juried Competition which was held in the United States. This summer he will take part in an exhibition in LACDA and in the California Museum of Photography.

Photo captions;

### 1.Profile

A Gretag color sample allows you to get the right tone in the pigments even though you are printing on something other than photograph paper. Gary has tested and measured its own profile for each print material.

### 2.Tools

### 3.In Our Time 2008

The foundations of this piece were photographs of a neighbors' motorcycle. The pieces are put together with modified nuts and bolts.

#### 4. Crazy

The Artist leaning against the five meter tall piece "Crazy", in the main hall in Riihimäki Art Museum.

#### 5. Aluminum sheet.

Gary has coated this aluminum sheet with adhesive which has sealed and protected the surface.

#### 6. Image handling.

#### 7. Qimage

Qimage print page. This Windows program can be downloaded from the internet. The programs professional license costs about 50 euro. All the settings used when printing can be saved in the programs memory.

#### 8. Hahnemühle Torchon paper

#### 9. Glamour II – post coat

#### 10. InkAID – pre-coat