

# Buying a Photograph

## Our Guide to

### Why should I buy photographs?

Photography is more popular than ever before, and there's never been a more exciting time to start collecting.

There is no need to specialise - simply buy the work you find the most beautiful, compelling, or thought provoking.

An easy way to discover what you like is to visit specialist galleries and bookshops – look at as many photographs as possible!

### Where can I find prices and what determines the value of a print?

Prices are written on the labels next to exhibited works, or in a separate price list, but don't be afraid to ask.

A signed print can cost as little as £200-£300. Print Sales staff are happy to recommend work to suit your taste and budget.

The Photographers' Gallery offers interest free loans as part of the Arts Council England's Own Art scheme. The scheme is open to everyone and allows you to borrow up to £2000 for any purchase over £100. Terms and conditions apply, see [www.artscouncil.org.uk/ownart](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/ownart) for more details or ask in Print Sales.

Generally, well-established names command higher prices than lesser known or emerging talents. Exclusivity or rarity also makes a difference.

Signed prints are more sought after than unsigned. Vintage prints are considered more valuable than modern re-prints as they are seen as historical artefacts. See the **Glossary** for definitions of print types.

## **How do I look after my print?**

Try to avoid any excess handling of your print. However if handling your print you should use two hands at all times and wear white cotton gloves.

To conserve your print it should be mounted and framed with acid-free, museum standard materials. Print Sales offers a Bespoke Framing Service which can help you with this.

When displaying your print avoid direct sunlight, extremes of temperature and humid environments. And don't forget to make sure you have adequate insurance as the value of your collection increases!

## **Creating a specialist photographic collection**

It is easier to build an impressive collection with photography than other art forms, as they are generally less expensive and more accessible.

Why not build a corporate collection, as a successful photography collection can greatly improve the quality of a work environment. It is also a potential financial investment, whatever size your business.

We can give expert advice on choosing photographs for your home or work environment, as well as offering bespoke framing and installation.

Contact us: +44 (0)20 7087 9320, [printsales@photonet.org.uk](mailto:printsales@photonet.org.uk)

## **Do's and Don'ts for Buying**

**Do** buy vintage prints in good condition with strong images

**Don't** buy prints in poor condition

**Do** buy reasonably priced, signed, modern prints from the original negative by well-established living photographers

**Don't** buy mass produced inkjets in large editions, even those by famous photographers

**Do** buy work you admire by up-and-coming photographers with a proven exhibition record

**Don't** buy unsigned unauthenticated prints

**Do** buy the best you can afford

**Don't** buy poor images by well-known names

**Do** take time to find out about photography by reading books and journals, visiting exhibitions, and becoming acquainted with a specialist photography gallery. Increase your knowledge of the market and confidence in purchasing

**Don't** buy just because you've been told they're the next *big thing*

## **Glossary of Photographic Terms**

### **C-type print**

A colour print in which the print material has at least three emulsion layers of light sensitive silver salts with each layer sensitised to a different primary colour.

### **Edition/ Limited Edition**

A maximum number of prints produced of an image in a certain size or with a certain printing method. The prints are numbered with the chronological number of the print followed by the size of the edition. For example, 2/20 signifies print number two from an edition limited to 20.

### **Estate print**

A print produced posthumously, ie. after the photographer has died, from the original negative. Estate prints are usually authenticated by a family member.

### **Modern print**

A print produced some time after the photograph was taken. For example, a photograph printed in 1998 from a negative made in 1939 would be considered a modern print. These are sometimes also called later prints. See Vintage print, below.

### **Platinum print**

A black and white process using platinum as the light sensitive material. Platinum prints generally possess a greater tonal range than silver gelatin prints.

### **Provenance**

A history detailing the origin and ownership history of a print. Most modern prints come directly from the photographer.

### **R-type print**

A print made by the reversal process, ie. from a positive. These are sometimes referred to by their brand name, such as Cibachrome.

### **Signed verso / recto**

A signature on the back of the print is denoted verso, and on the front recto.

### **Silver gelatin print**

A black and white photograph produced on paper with a light sensitive silver compound adhered with a gelatin 'glue'.