

Artist Tony Crosse is using giclee to help youngsters and adults cope with those stressful and worrying experiences – hospital visits.

Tony, who earned a BA (Hons) and MA in European Fine Art at Canterbury and Southampton respectively is now working on a PhD. He's been invited to participate in a project, funded by a grant, called Art and Well-Being at Christchurch College, Canterbury, including co-ordination of the Medway Hospitals Healing Arts Programme initiative - HAPi.

The Gillingham hospital's aim is to improve the quality of life for those involved with giving and receiving health treatment, based on the belief that artwork generates a sense of ownership, enriches the life of patients, visitors and staff, provides way-finding and landmarks, promotes quality and identity, demonstrates care, assists recovery and alleviates stress.

A recent project created by Tony for the Ear, Nose and Throat waiting room is a 10ft x 4ft set of five panels printed on his hp designjet 5000 using UV inks. He created drawings of a wide variety of birds, animals, insects and plants. He then digitally resized them and created a large collage. Children waiting for appointments are given a form and try to identify as many of the species as possible.

Another project in the pipeline is a series of paintings for the three bays linked to the operating theatre – the waiting, anaesthesia and recovery bays. Research has shown that patients frequently report having had nightmares when they come round from operations, and the team want to find out whether the images they see in the bays can be made to have a positive effect.

In addition to these major projects, Tony produces other artwork and posters for display throughout the hospital.

He creates images through various hands-on media such as acrylic and oil paintings. These are scanned or photographed to be turned into limited edition prints.

The prints are produced in-house on a 60-inch, 6-colour Hewlett Packard designjet 5000. Tony relies on the designjet for clear, stable printing and speed. He chose the pigment-based UV ink option for image lightfastness through UV resistance. HP's colour layering technology and the 1200dpi resolution also allow for smooth transitions and give a wide colour gamut.

Tony uses heavy coated paper such as Hahnemuehle's Albrecht Durer. Nick Owen at Copytech Imaging Solutions, who supply Tony with printing consumables said: "The fine art market in which Tony operates is very specialised and high growth. One of the most important elements in art reproduction is the media and we're constantly working to ensure we have the most comprehensive, tried and tested range available."

Tony's favoured method for digitising his artwork is to take a photo on a standard film camera, and have the image put straight onto CD at a high street photolab. This removes the scanning stage from his in house processes.

Tony said: "The reproduction quality on the hp designjet is excellent, with just the texture missing. Some people want hand embellished prints in order to get the surface feel of the original. In the past we've even repainted entire pictures on top of the inkjet output. We can use this technique to change colours such as a red background to a blue background if people want a painting personalising for their particular room colour scheme."

Tony's limited edition print runs tend to vary between 150 and 950, with each copy printed on demand – meaning reduced financial risk and less storage space needed for stock.

The USA is Tony's main target market, and he boosts sales of his prints by exhibiting the originals in various galleries. He also uses the web to market his artwork and has seen business start to come in after placing an advert in the Yellow Pages.

He also produces limited edition prints for two artist friends – Barry Leighton-Jones and Martin Aynscombe-Harris.

Tony concluded: "Art has always been an enduring interest and profitable hobby for me. Judging by what I see in galleries and read in magazines I think the general public, especially in the U.K, are becoming more visually aware."

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