

Technology & Art

Our homes today have been invaded by technology: a wide-screen TV in the living room, a computer and fax in the home office, and remote controls scattered everywhere. Amid this contemporary clutter, a painting hanging on the wall is oddly comforting—a vestige, regardless of subject matter, of reverence for traditional techniques and materials.

Certainly the wonder of having access to a hundred cable channels or of e-mailing friends across the globe is immense. But the wonder of that painting—each brush stroke made by the artist's hand, each color mixed with care—is more satisfying and enduring. We find solace there, and joy.

And yet, surely to our benefit, technology has also invaded the world of art collecting. The number of galleries with Web sites, for example, seems to increase daily, and the quality of the sites is improving as well. Today, without leaving home, we can transport ourselves via computer to galleries and museums across the country and around the world, viewing artworks with the click of a button. While the impact isn't the same as seeing these works in person, it's getting closer all the time. Will we soon discover new artworks by calling up a three-dimensional version of a painting on our computer screen, able to see the brush strokes and smell the faint scent of paint?

Limited-edition prints, too, are edging closer to resembling original paintings. This month's Focus on Prints includes a look at printing methods past and present. Two hundred years ago, lithography was a cutting-edge printing technique newly invented by Alois Senefelder, a German playwright. Our "In the Museums" column documents the history of lithography as a fine-art form, in conjunction with a two-part exhibit on view at the Detroit Institute of Arts, MI.

Today's cutting-edge printing technologies include a range of methods, among them the "limited-edition canvas" reproductions marketed by The Greenwich Workshop. These textured-canvas prints aim to replicate the look and feel of an original painting, complete with a three-dimensional recreation of the artist's brush strokes. We give you an up-close look at this process in an article beginning on page 46, which follows Greenwich's recent reproduction of Wilson Hurley's monumental murals at the National Cowboy Hall of Fame.

It's somewhat ironic that technology has moved us forward to computer images and prints that look more and more like paintings created by an individual's hand. Clearly, our reverence for tradition remains undiminished.

—Margaret L. Brown
Editor

WILSON HURLEY,
UTAH SUITE [1998],
TEXTURED-CANVAS PRINT,
CENTER PANEL, 24 x 24.

