

**Can you
self-publish an
art book?**

Yes.

Not so long ago, to publish a book was an expensive exercise, requiring specialist equipment and skills. It wasn't worth doing for less than around 500 copies.

Now, it IS feasible to print single copies or short runs.

Steps

1. Photography
2. Image processing
3. Layout
4. Printing
5. Awards Ceremony

1. Photography

Images need to be 300DPI (dots per inch) / 118 Pixels per cm at the size they're printed.

Translation:

If the images in your book are A4 (210 x 297mm), they will need to be 3504 x 2478 pixels **minimum**.

You will note that graphics people use 'dots' and 'pixels' as though they're the same thing (they're not always), and measure sizes in mm, but resolution in inches. We do this to be confusing to outsiders.

Photographing artwork is not simple.

It needs to be evenly lit, correctly exposed, straight, in focus, colour balanced and a high enough resolution for the size it will be printed at.

‘Colour Balance’ relates to how ‘warm’ or ‘cold’ the lights you’re using are. For example, sunlight is actually slightly blue.

You will probably need the artwork out of the frame.
Glass adds a whole extra level of problems.

There is no reason you can’t do it yourself, but be prepared for some trial and error. I have studio lights, tripod, 24MP Nikon camera, 90mm Macro lens... and still struggle to get a decent result.

2. Image Processing

It's unlikely you will be able to use the images straight out of the camera.

They will almost certainly need to be cropped, straightened and exposure adjusted.

Cameras shoot in RGB mode. Most printers will require the images to be in CMYK (AKA Process Colours).

You will need Photoshop, or an equivalent to do this.

3. Layout

The design of your book. Placing images and text on the pages where you want them.

To do this, you will need a computer application that will export in a format your chosen printer can work with, or otherwise 'talk' to their system.

MS Word will **NOT** do this. It is not a layout program.

The professional weapon of choice is InDesign, part of the Adobe Creative Suite. It can do pretty much anything, but is not simple to learn (or cheap).
Just ask Ev.

So it's more practical to get a professional to help with this stage (Insert Ruthless Self-Promotion Here.)

There are alternatives - one provider I use (Blurb.com) has free software available for both Mac and PC: BookWright, which will even work with RGB images.

It also has templates available, if you don't have a specific design in mind.

With this, it should be possible to lay it out yourself. (Disclaimer: I haven't used it.)

4. Printing

There are a number of online companies that specialise in short run, or 'Print On Demand' printing.

- IngramSpark
- Lightning Source
 - Blurb

To name a few I've worked with. There are many others - I would suggest you do some research as there may be companies that specialise in art books.

I like Blurb, simply because they were one of the first in the market, and their system integrates directly with InDesign.

I've done around 20 books with them and been happy with the quality and usually surprised with the turn-around times. That said, I'm mostly doing one-off photo books or company presentations, so you need to find what suits you.

Cost

These prices are from Blurb, and are intended to give some idea of what you're getting into. The rule is that the more you print, the cheaper it gets per unit.. but the higher the total outlay.

Standard Landscape (250 x 200mm) 100PP 1-9 copies
Softcover \$72
Imagewrap Hardcover \$90

Large Landscape (330 x 280mm) 100PP 1-9 copies
Imagewrap Hardcover \$136

50+ copies 25% discount

From IngramSpark / LightningSource:

216 x 280mm (as big as they go) 100PP 1-9 copies

Softcover \$16

Imagewrap Hardcover \$22

Note: IS & LS appear to be part of the same company.

I've only worked with them on novels, so they may not be ideal for art books.

Prices don't include delivery.

5. Awards Ceremony

There are lots of reasons not to do a book:

- It won't sell
- It's too much work
- It won't be any good
etc...

If you do go ahead, remember that even if it doesn't sell, isn't very good, and you only ever produce one copy - that's still one book more than nearly everybody else.

Place it conspicuously on your coffee table and have a drink to celebrate.