Printing Index Color Separations

Index Separations are bitmaps, so the easiest way to print this type of file is directly with Photoshop. And since we're not dealing with grayscale channels, a RIP isn't required if not available.

Prior to the following instructions on how to print Index separations to film, there's a few things that need to be known about Index separations.

Make sure the artwork is uploaded to us at the exact final dimensions intending to print with.

Do not attempt to resize an Index separation as it will result in poor output quality.

Art that contains excessive gradients or fade off into the shirt are not good choices for Index.

Index separations "usually" require more colors to print accurately. Of course, this all depends on the art.

An Index separation is a multichannel bitmap file that doesn't use halftones. The color channels with Index are comprised of tiny squares. The higher the resolution of the original image, the smaller the squares will be. If the original file resolution is high such as 300 dpi, these squares will be far too small. We normally resample the original to 175 dpi - 200 dpi when generating Index separations.

Do not attempt to set any screen angles or LPI settings prior to output. Just print out each channel to film using default settings.

The color channels can not be adjusted (darkened - lightened) with Index.

The only changes that can be made to the Index separation is changing the color and name of a channel.

If a change or adjustment is needed with an Index job, the entire separation usually needs to be done again from the beginning.

Index separations can appear grainy on screen, especially at higher zoom levels. This is normal.

Overall, Index separations print much better than its screen preview indicates.

Once on press, Index jobs sometimes require more time to blend correctly so its usually a good idea to run a few additional test prints.

Index jobs are very forgiving and extremely easy to control on press.

Printing Index Separations to film is identical to printing halftone separations directly from earlier versions of Photoshop but without applying screens, angles and dot shape to each channel as its not required.

Make sure the RGB or any other composite channels above the separation are deleted.

Make sure all channels are turned on with the "Eye" visible next to each.

Next choose Print
(In Photoshop versions CS1-CS2 "Print With Preview").

Select Color Management and make certain "Separations" is selected.

If Separations is not selected, the films will not print.

Within the Print Dialog Box, select "Color Management" in the upper right corner and then choose "Separations".
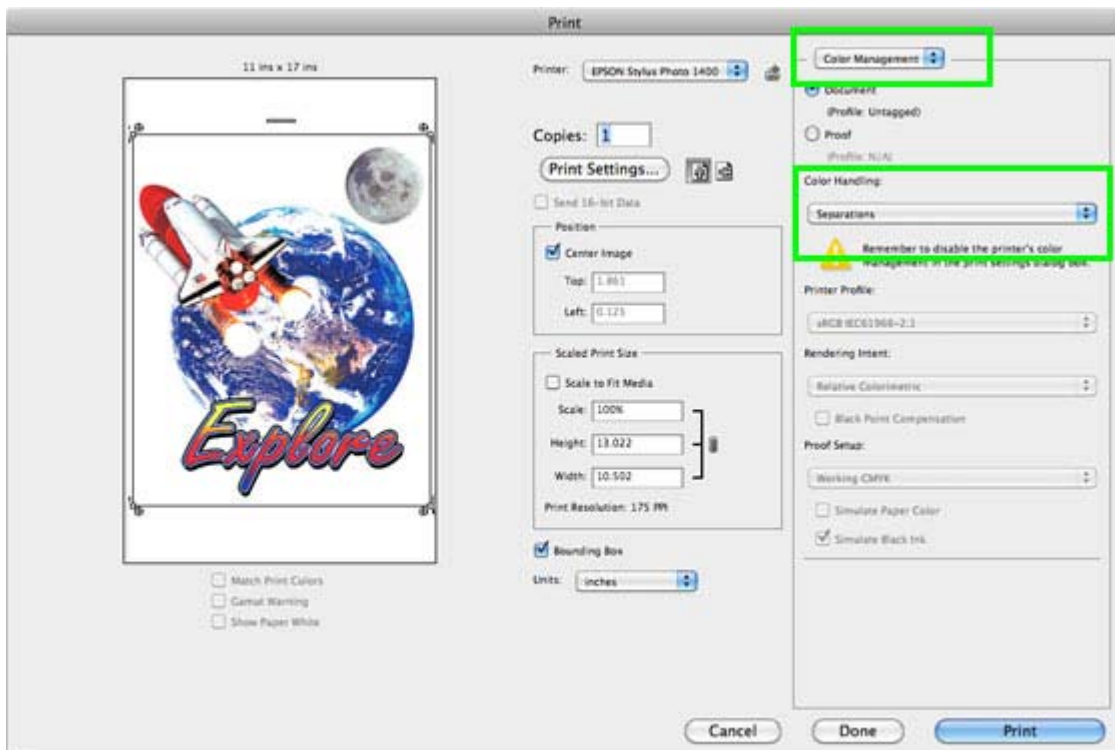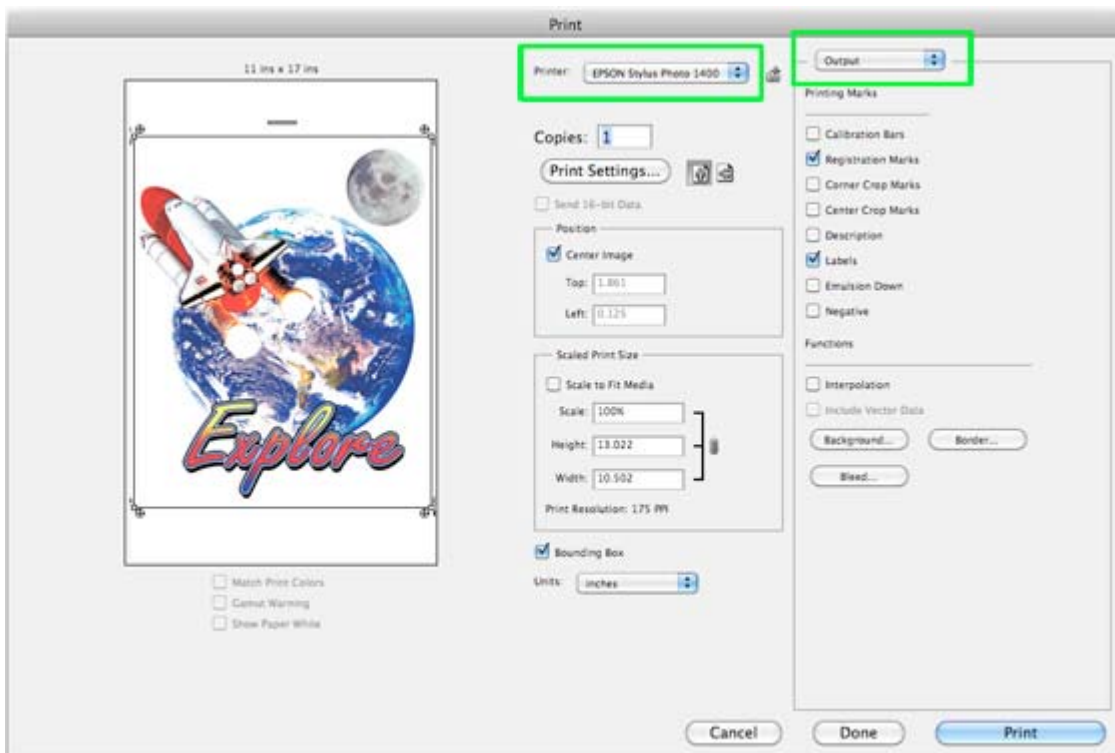
Next select "Output" in the upper right corner.

Make sure the correct Printer is selected along with the page size.

Check "Labels" so the color of each channel is listed on the film.

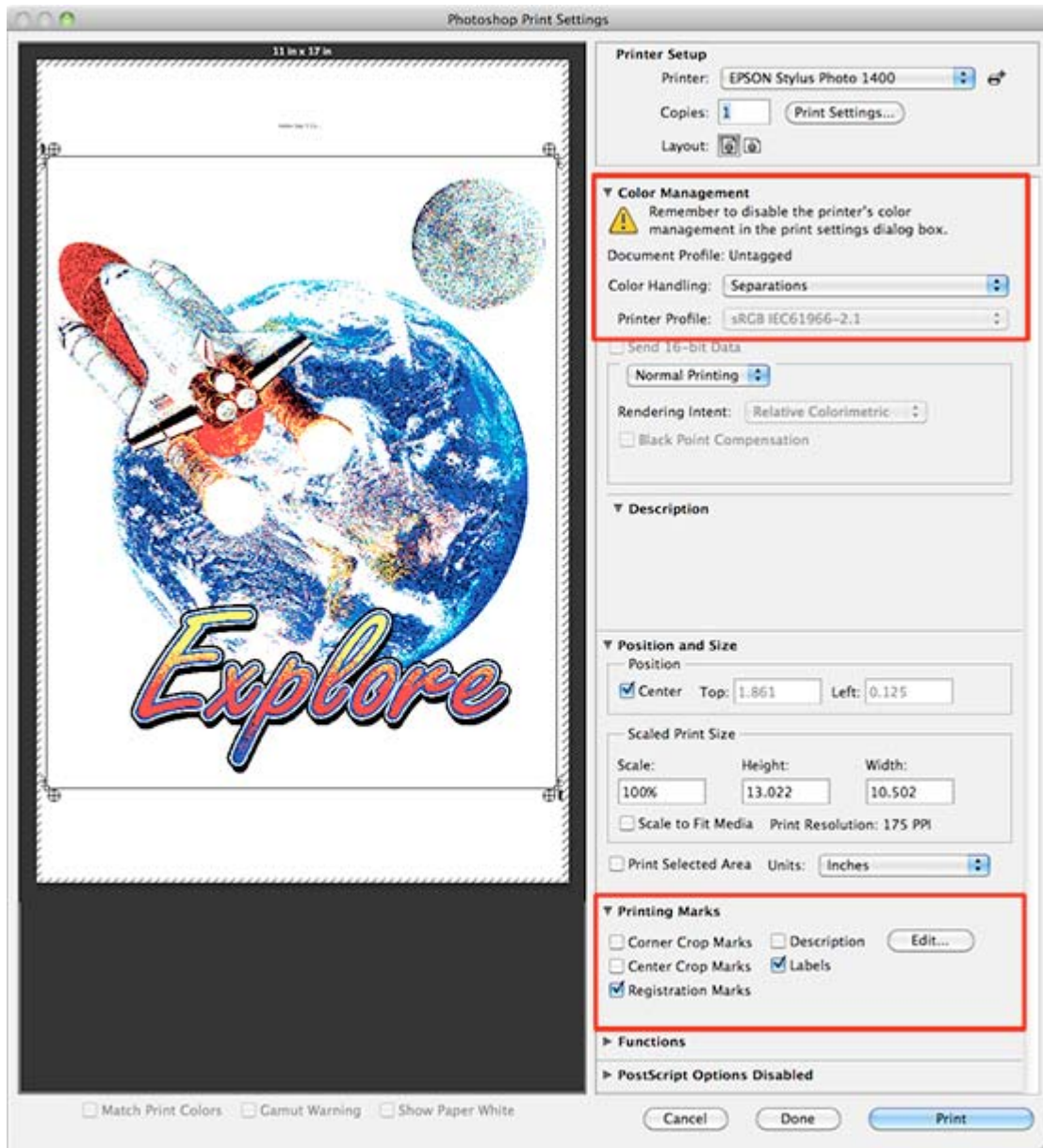If register marks have not been added previously, check "Register Marks".

Click "Print".

And that's it. There's nothing else to do.

Each channel will now print to film.

Above is a screen shot of the CS6 print window. The preview may appear very grainy as compared to earlier Photoshop versions. This is normal.

Printing an Index separation using Photoshop CS6 or higher is the same as with older versions discussed previously although Adobe has changed the appearance of the Print screen.

So after selecting your designated printer, page size, etc., the Color Management section is directly under it. Make sure to select Separations.

Scrolling further down within the Print window is where you'll find other print options such as Labels, Register Marks, etc.

Once satisfied with the settings, just click Print and each channel will image to film.

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