Creative Point of View

■ BY KATRIN EISMANN

The Global Fusion of Collaboration

Being an artist has often been associated with isolation and struggle. But digital technology is allowing artists to reach out, exchange, and collaborate across borders, time zones, and generations to create compelling artwork that's much more than the sum of its parts.

People travel for many reasons—some enjoy whiling away the time on sandy beaches or visiting cultural and natural tourist attractions. Recently, Lyn Bishop and her husband Taro traveled across much of India and Asia to focus on learning, sharing, inspiration, and creating artwork with a wide variety of artists and students. Upon arriving home, Lyn simply didn't unpack her bags and return to a hectic California lifestyle. Instead, she continued her collaborative projects by working with students from the Srishti School of Art, Design, and Technology (Bangalore, India) to produce a stunning fine-art book that was conceptualized, designed, and produced in a sleep-deprived five days at the Guerilla Studios at the SIGGRAPH Conference in Boston this past August.

[The Guerilla Studio is a state-of-the-art digital atelier that offers a dizzying array of creative technology from 2D image-making and printmaking, to 3D scanning and printing, to motion capture, and digital drawing circles—all free for conference attendees to use.]

Artistic partnership

In the din and rush of the Guerrilla Studio, Lyn explains, "Artistic collaboration requires that I step outside of myself and communicate my ideas with others. And it invites me to let my creative sensibility be free to mingle with another's."

"At first, collaboration can be intimidating," Lynn continues. "I had to learn to push myself to engage in the interac-

tion. Self-doubt and self-critique can be loud voices in my head when I'm beginning to collaborate with someone new. Interestingly enough, the doubting voices are never about the other person's artwork; they're always about my own. 'Will I be creative enough? Will my contribution mesh with the work...' But once the process begins and the creative juices start to flow, these voices of self-doubt slowly recede into the shadows, making way for that amazing rush of energy that happens when combined creative forces meet."

If dreams could talk

Using iSight and iChat to connect with students in Bangalore, India, each day, Lyn worked together with Kumkum Nadig, a faculty member from the Srishti School of Art, Design, and Technology to create an international collaboration to discuss strategies, review and critique digital art files, and work together on layout and production.

Dreams are the touchstone of our character...
Go confidently in the direction of your dreams, live
the life you have imagined. Henry David Thoreau

Using the Guerilla Studio call for participation as a jumping-off point, the group pursued the idea of dreams and specifically concentrated on the dissociated images and impressions that quickly fade away upon waking.

The working process started by having each collaborator upload two source files to a common directory of shared images, which became the image library of the dissociated image collection. Then collaborators chose one or two of these dissociated source images, worked them together with their own personal source material to create a new image, and then wrote a short phrase to go with each of the images.

Each morning at 9 EST (7.30 p.m. in India), the teams would connect via iSight. During these sessions, Lyn and Kumkum would critique the work that had been done and discuss strategies for completing the project. Monday and Tuesday were dedicated to image creation. On Wednesday, Stephan Powilat and Mathias Vogel, winners of the Adobe Design and Achievement Awards in the category of Print Design Multi-Page, designed and laid out the covers and interiors. They brought a distinctly contemporary German flavor to the typographic treatment of the book, adding yet another continent and international flavor to the collaboration. Master Printmaker Larry Danque and Lyn stayed up

until 4.30 a.m. on Thursday to print the edition. Each was 6x156" or 1440x37440 ppi. As Lyn learned, "We had to save and print a TIFF file as we had exceeded the allowed 30,000-pixel dimension of a Photoshop file." The files were printed 7-up on an Epson 9800 using Hahnemühle Photo Rag 188-gms Fine Art Paper And finally, the pages were cut, scored, and folded into the handmade book that each participant received.

Creating connections

Quiet, uninterrupted, isolated creative time is important to one's artistic practice and skill development. Just as important, however, is how artists are exploring, developing, and participating in opportunities to create compelling work in a shared creative environment. The collaborative process draws from the strengths of each of the participants and the results are exciting and engaging, fulfilling a basic need for all of humankind to connect and relate on a personal, peaceful, and positive level.

THANK YOU

Katrin Eismann (www.katrineismann.com), author of Photoshop Restoration & Retouching *and* Photoshop Masking & Compositing, *is an internationally recognized artist, author, and educator. She was inducted into the Photoshop Hall of Fame in 2005 and has been named to be Chair of the Masters in Professional Studies in Digital Photography at the NYC School of Visual Arts.*

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