

Lyn & Taro in Angkor Wat, Cambodia  
(below)

**Bantey Srey Temple** (far right, top)  
Detail of Bantey Srey Temple,  
Angkor Wat, Cambodia

**Burma** (far right, bottom)  
At the Market, Phaung Daw Oo  
Pagoda, Inle Lake, Burma (Myanmar)



Inspiring  
cultural  
curiosity  
through art  
and word

# Creative Journey



With the aim of gaining direct experience, 'as opposed to information and images fed through the filters of corporate media', Lyn Bishop and Taro Tsuzuki embarked on the journey of a lifetime when they decided to take on the Global Fusion project. Throughout the 13 month journey, the pair produced 61 blog entries and six issues of an electronic magazine they called Fusion Journal, all written in two languages: English and Japanese. Loueze Harper spoke to Lyn and Taro about their travels and the Global Fusion project.

Lyn Bishop and Taro Tsuzuki—who met while working at Adobe—are the brains behind the collaborative effort that makes up the Global Fusion project. Defined in the Mission Statement as ‘promoting cross-cultural understanding through artistic expression in visual and verbal art forms that celebrate the diversity of the world’s cultures’, Global Fusion is an exploration of people, arts, cultures and societies of the world, as seen through the eyes and senses of Lyn and Taro.

‘We documented our experience with writings and photography’, Lyn explains, adding that along the way, she was thrilled and inspired to be able to collaborate with many local and travelling artists. ‘It was also the best way we could think of to tame the ever-present travel bug.’

#### Planning Global Fusion

Initially, Lyn undertook the main planning of the project, which included scheduling, travel planning, budgeting and promotion, while Taro took a part in establishing the blog website.

‘Our intention was to promote shared cultural experience, information exchange and artistic endeavours between diverse cultures through visual arts and the written word,’ says Lyn.

While Taro was the primary writer, text translator, ambient sound recorder and interviewer, Lyn played the roles of editor, layout designer, writer and, of course, artist. They shared the role of photographer. ‘We explored the world with an emphasis on arts and cultures,’ Lyn explains. ‘We expressed our observations of the societies we visited, and gained deeper insights into different aspects of culture, especially once we entered Asia.’

#### Observing relationships

Taro’s writings reflected social and often political views, notably in developing nations, while the pair spent a lot of time observing the state of the tourism industry as they travelled. ‘Observing relationships among Western travellers’ behavioural patterns, effects of Western travel businesses, locals’ business strategies and integrations of

these elements were of interest, as they contributed in our own decision-making and behaviours.’

Lyn also admits that encountering unexpected incidents—such as Taro’s illness with malaria and the tsunami of late 2004, which hit while they were at the tip of India—affected their views and attitudes toward the state of the earth and politics that surround it.

‘Not to mention our views of life in general,’ she adds. ‘We felt that simply being at places that we had never been before unfolded a completely new and different world before our eyes.’

Learning, therefore, became the primary underlying mental activity for Lyn and Taro and both gained a lot in this respect.

‘Opening our minds and accepting the way a given environment is as a whole were, we felt, the keys to learning. We admit that we felt free; away from “grind” of daily hustles and bustles in the advanced societies, thereby gaining a sense of freedom in expressing our findings and newly acquired views, so as to share them to others.’ Learning to live with just the minimal possessions in their backpacks affected their views of the ‘material-flooded world’. ‘We wished that many citizens of advanced societies could experience travel with an abundance of time, allowing the room necessary to encounter peoples and cultures of the world,’ Taro comments.

#### Working the blogs

When it came to the blogs, Taro generally came up with the topics, although Lyn also had a lot of input into this aspect.

‘Taro normally started out by writing a draft in English, then I would read and edit it,’ says Lyn. ‘When the English text was completed, Taro translated it into Japanese, while I selected and worked on accompanying images for the entry.’ Once both the English and Japanese text was ready and the images chosen, Lyn and Taro saved it all onto a USB bus drive or memory card, and then looked for an Internet café to post the entry.

‘We ran into the issue of managing digital photos early on, which made us realise that we needed to be quite diligent and consistent in the “photo editing” process,’

says Lyn. ‘Every evening, we emptied compact flash cards onto our PowerBook, and then sorted through the images using Photoshop’s File Browser—now Bridge in CS2. We deleted the bad ones and renamed the good ones according to specific places—such as temple names or exact locations—so that we would be able to refer to them accurately. We created a folder for each day of the year, and the images were saved into these daily folders.’ Lyn and Taro shot all their images in RAW, and high quality .jpg for the S410. ‘Whenever we had about 4Gb of images, we would burn two DVDs,’ says Taro. ‘One copy was sent to Lyn’s brothers house, the other to her aunt’s house, to insure receipt, and as a backup in case one was damaged.’

#### Road-testing the equipment

Although travelling light is generally the key when covering such distances over time, there were some necessities for a journey of this calibre. Essential hardware for the trip included a Canon 10D and a Canon Elph S410, as well as a G4 PowerBook with English Mac OS X, with an external FireWire hard drive (60Gb) with Japanese Mac OS X. ‘Although Mac OS X is versatile enough to allow multiple language scripts, it was important to have two work environments in two languages, mainly for stability concerns,’ Lyn explains. ‘While this setup worked extremely well for us, having different configurations for Adobe CS software—especially InDesign—caused some issues initially.’

This included the problem of two different colour spaces for imported Photoshop files and two sets of varying character and paragraph style definitions.

‘When the first (English) draft of Fusion Journal issue 1—created in InDesign—was opened by Japanese version of InDesign, the draft file looked completely different.’ Needless to say, Lyn and Taro quickly learned how to share their InDesign files. ‘We were extremely fortunate with the reliability of the hardware we brought with us,’ says Lyn, also marvelling at the wide availability of the net—‘although there was a distinct difference between connection speeds, reliability and local prices’.



(top, left to right) Sunrise on the Irrawaddy, near Mandalay, Burma (Myanmar); Lyn & Taro at Amber Fort, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India; 911 Prayer Flag at Namtso Lake, Tibet; Taro takes in the view of the Steppe, Central Mongolia; Monk outside Gandan Monastery, Ulan Bator, Mongolia; Reflections at Shwedagon Pagoda, Rangoon, Burma (Myanmar); Lyn & Taro self portrait at De Appel Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland

But their experiences were not without ‘annoying inconveniences’. ‘The biggest issue was always the available version of Microsoft Windows,’ Taro says. ‘Windows XP and 2000 allowed plug-and-play when we used USB bus drives to post blog entries using web browsers. Older versions required a device driver for the removable device, specific to each version. These later versions of Windows were not available in many places, especially in developing nations.’ Other problems included the handling of multiple language scripts for the English and Japanese characters, and the varying price of net access. ‘It was ridiculously high in some places—especially in some parts of developing nations—to the point where we could not justify the cost,’ Taro says. ‘High price per minute didn’t mean the access speed was fast either.’

**The format**  
The process of publishing the Fusion Journal was established early on. Lyn developed a sample issue before they embarked on the journey, and the pair tightened up the format as they published each issue. ‘Our webmaster, Michael Beaudet, developed the Paypal intragration and created a web-based email blast application to alert subscribers and others that a new issue was available,’ Taro explains. ‘For each issue, we developed a list of possible articles and photographs.’ Each issue was made up of sections, including: features, food, faces, geo guide, resources and colophon sections. ‘The faces section was a big hit with subscribers,’ Taro reveals. At the end of each two month cycle, Lyn and Taro would find a place to settle for a week—‘someplace with a desk to work comfortably, and we would write, edit photos, layout and then publish the issue before we moved on’. Pages were laid out in InDesign, while regional maps were created in Illustrator. The photos were edited using the beta version of Photoshop CS2. ‘Lyn was crazy,’ Taro laughs. ‘Downloading new builds (300-400Mb) wherever she could

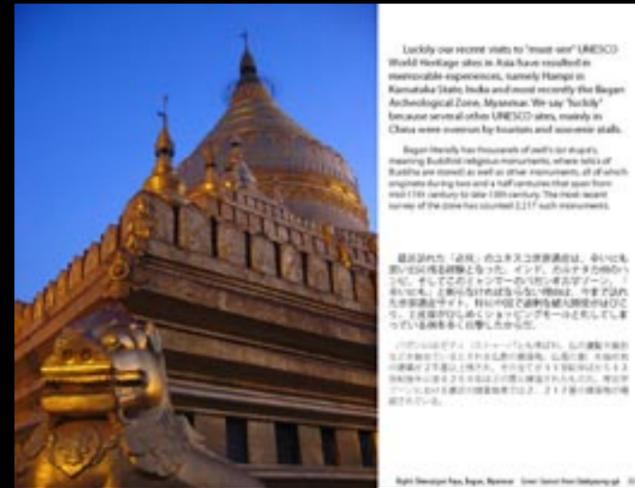
get a stable internet connection.’ Once the English text and graphics were laid out, Taro took the English InDesign file into the Japanese version of the product to lay out the Japanese text. ‘When we felt that the issue was complete,’ Lyn continues, ‘we exported the InDesign file as a PDF ebook—in high and low resolution settings—and sent them to Michael to upload to the server. Once they were on the server and tested, we sent out a blast email to subscribers and our mailing list informing them of the availability.’

**Photographing the world**  
With many of the places visited by Lyn and Taro, the surroundings were so picturesque that it seemed to them that anything would make a good photo—‘India and Tibet come to our minds’—but in the interests of better, more interesting images, the pair learned several things on the road. ‘One is to observe places and people to the point where we would feel familiar with the environment,’ says Lyn. ‘Lights, behavioural patterns, expressions, customs and so on. Through knowing these elements, we could gain some intentions to capture what we thought as expressive images.’ In terms of influences, Lyn and Taro are inspired largely by photographers who are able to tell a story through photography. ‘Photography can be a powerful communication tool, so it was the primary visual component of our work,’ says Taro. ‘Some of the inspirations come from the excellent travel/culture/lifestyle magazines published in Japan—such as *Tabigaku* and *Spectator*, which take a serious look at the cultural adventures found in off the beaten track travel. Meeting Pedro Meyer at the i3Forums was an inspiration for Lyn, while I love the work of Shinya Fujiwara’. An initial challenge for the journey was mastering the learning curve of the two new digital cameras bought just prior to the trip. ‘We weren’t afraid of trying anything—except throwing them around,’ Lyn laughs. But the biggest lesson the pair learned was how to approach locals and ask whether they could take their photos. ‘Their responses varied largely depending on their cultures; in some society, it was

flat out “no” and we had to think of other ways to approach them to get the shots we wanted,’ Taro explains. ‘While in other cultures we were thanked for taking their photos. The latter didn’t always make things easier, as it was difficult to get them in their natural state without poses. Lyn really enjoyed this exchange between people, and the people loved seeing themselves on the camera’s LCD. It became a very immediate and exciting way to interact with them.’

**Where to now?**  
After about 16 months of travel—including driving across America in the summer of 2005—Lyn and Taro have already achieved many of the goals they set for themselves. ‘While most of what we laid out in our initial proposal was accomplished, we never did get the corporate sponsorship we hoped for, nor were we able to leave any new technology behind for developing digital art programs,’ says Lyn. ‘We’re grateful to our advocates who helped us early on, and to Apple India, Adobe India, and Epson India for their support of my workshop at National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad.’ In addition to a new blog entry on average every week of the 13 month international trip, and publishing a total six issues of the Fusion Journal, Lyn completed six collaborations with other artists, and is now working on a new series of artwork based on the cultures and experiences she lived while travelling. ‘We plan to continue writing, making art and making photos. We are working on slideshow of images on DVD and are searching for opportunities to publish and exhibit the work in various places across our beautiful planet,’ says Taro, adding that they are currently in Japan to look for opportunities to publish and exhibit the Global Fusion project to a larger audience. ‘Besides about US\$2000 in subscriptions, the project was entirely self-funded. While many people look at us like we must be rich or something, the truth is we saved every spare penny for several years to make this dream a reality. We made a dream come true.’

www.onelove.com/globalfusion  
www.lynbishop.com



**Fusion Journals: The Global Fusion Journey** (above, series)  
Starting in Europe—with a strong intention to explore the visual arts there—Lyn and Taro initially set off from Amsterdam and travelled to Barcelona (Spain), Berlin (Germany), Basel and Buchs (Switzerland). Reaching Moscow, the pair took the Trans Siberian Railroad (five days on a train) to Irkutsk and Lake Baikal in Siberia, before continuing onto Mongolia for a month. ‘We published the first Fusion Journal in Ulan Bator with dialup internet connection,’ Lyn laughs, adding that after that came two months in China—including three weeks in Beijing, before heading southwest to Chengdu. From there, they visited Tibet, and travelled around the southwestern provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan. ‘We took a little break in Thailand, staying and resting on an island called Ko Lanta for three



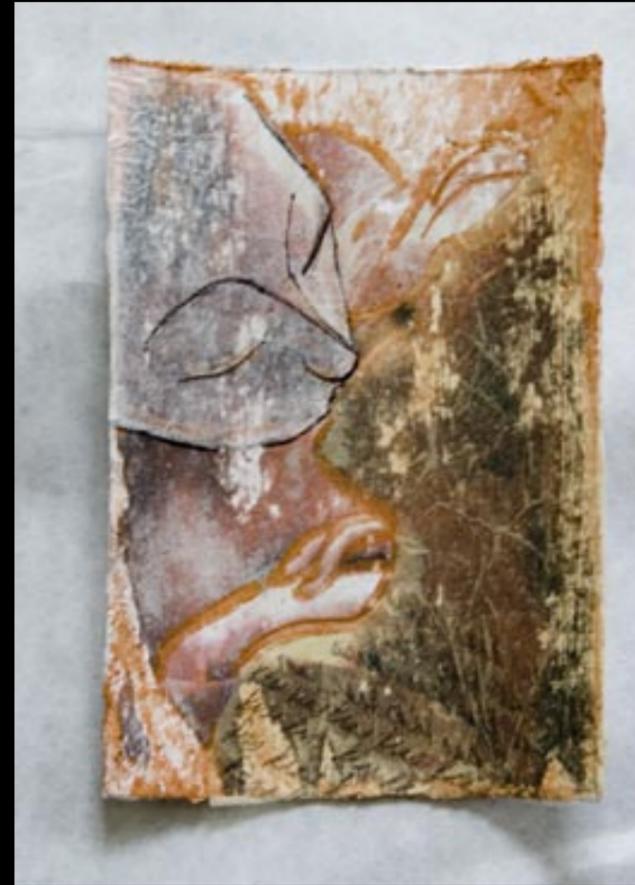
weeks,’ says Lyn. ‘We published the second Fusion Journal there and then number three in Bangkok, before we entered India for three months. The journey took us mostly to the western side of India, from Kashmir in the north to Kerala State at the southern tip of the subcontinent.’ After three months’ travel in India and publishing issue number four of the journal at Kovalum Beach, Lyn and Taro returned to Bangkok—‘which became our hub’—published the fifth journal and started to explore Southeast Asian nations, including Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia—the latter consisting of one week in Angkor Wat. ‘The thirteenth and the last month of Global Fusion was spent on the beautiful island of Bali, Indonesia,’ Lyn says, ‘where we enjoyed the pleasantly slow pace of life and published issue number 6 before we headed back to the States.’



**They Know** (above, series)  
An edition of hand pulled silkscreen prints with Swiss photographer, Jacques LeCortre in Buchs, Switzerland. This involved using both digital (photographs and ink jet prints) and analogue technologies (copy machine, traditional silk screens and traditional press).



**911 Prayer Flag**  
 Installation of the 911 Prayer Flag in Tibet.  
 Photographs by Taro Tsuzuki  
 Art and Installation by Lyn Bishop  
 Prayers by the monks at Namtso Lake,  
 Tibet  
 (Story featured in Fusion Journal issue 3;  
 August 2004)

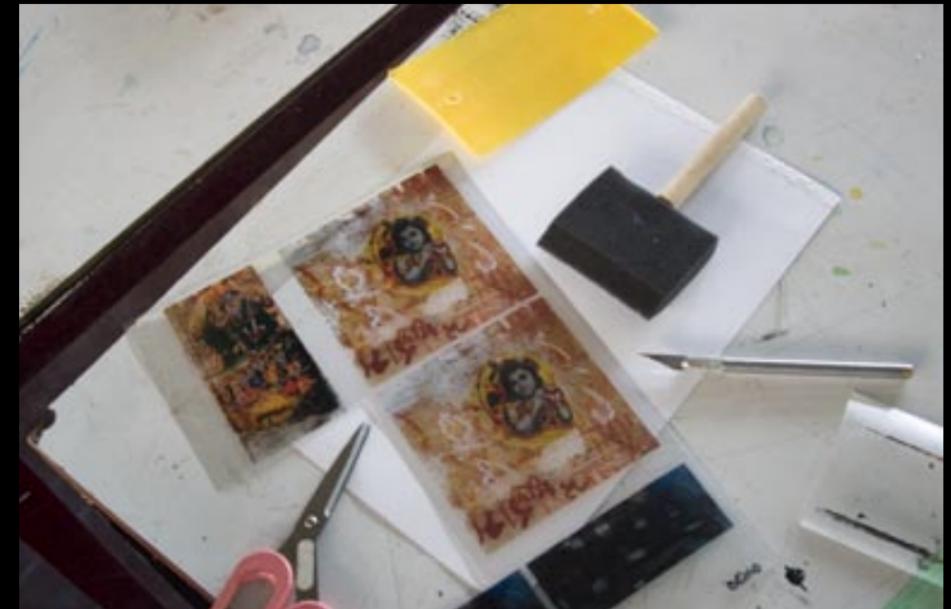


**The Kiss** (left)  
 Collage, tissue paper, acrylics, charcoal  
 Created in Berlin, Germany June 2004

**Krishna in Bali** (right)  
 Mixed media: digital transfer, acrylics,  
 fabric, leaf  
 Created in Bali, Indonesia May 2005



**Laos**  
Monks climb the stairs of Patousay, Vientiane, Laos



**Workshop: National Institute of Design**

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