

# Powering Digital Artistry

Nothing exemplifies the march of digital print and highlights its capabilities more than the achievements of the niche market in digital art. And on that score, nothing illustrates the enterprise of digital art more than Digital Atelier which sees itself as a printmaking studio for the 21st Century.

**D**igital Atelier combines traditional studio and media techniques with digital imaging from its locations in the US near Boston Massachusetts, Boulder Colorado and Seattle, Washington where a dedicated and truly able trio of artists produce original fine art and unique editions using the very latest in computer imaging hardware and software.

Dorothy Simpson Krause, Bonny Lhotka and Karin Schminke are Digital Atelier. All three use the computer in the course of their work, devising wide ranging creations on a wide and varied range of media but each in their own, very individual ways. Their digital creations range from one-off paintings to collages, image transfers and monotypes, printing on surfaces as diverse as plywood, silk, rusty metal and even hand-made substrates.

Demonstrations, presentations and workshops have been given at diverse venues including the College Art Association, MacWorld, and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Moreover, work from Digital Atelier studios is nationally and internationally displayed. Over 200 corporate and museum collections display Digital Atelier digital art including the permanent collection of the American Art Museum of the Smithsonian Institution.

Further spreading the word according to Digital Atelier, Watson-Guptill published in 2004, *Digital Art Studio, Techniques for Combining Inkjet Printing with Traditional Art Materials*. The publication details the digital mixed media processes the trio of digital artists have developed and worked with over the past ten years.

*Digital Art Studio*, ISBN 0 8230 1342 1, presents new ways for digital artists to take their work forward into new areas of creativity using a wide and diverse range of media. Based around the experienced and exhaustive works of the three digital artist authors, the book presents techniques and ideas easily accessible for those with desktop inkjets or access to wide format printers.

Dorothy Simpson Krause, Bonny Lhotka and Karin Schminke also carry out research on emerging technologies and share their findings with fellow artists. Furthermore, they feed back the artists' perspectives to developers, spotlighting successful innovation.

Work from the Digital Art Studio is a 36 piece exhibition by Dorothy Simpson Krause, Bonny Lhotka and Karin Schminke now being made available to galleries and museums across the continental US by the American Print



*Arms and weapons by Dorothy Simpson Krause. 24 x 32 inches; UV cured print on bagasses paper from the series Jewel.*



Alliance for showing in 2006 and beyond. The exhibition is based on the artists' work and techniques highlighted in their book. "Even for artists who are uninterested in computer and inkjet options," says Alliance Director Carol Pulin, "it is an amazing inspiration for thinking outside the box for techniques and media, of course, but also in terms of transfers, surfaces and all sorts of conceptual and imaginative ideas."

Hardware used by the Digital Atelier artists includes Epson inkjets for fine art printing, Encads for inkjet transfer printing, Mutoh inkjets for fabric printing, Microtek slide and flatbed scanners, Olympus digital cameras and Wacom digitising tablets. Their computerised systems run Adobe Photoshop and Flipsigns lenticular software, as well as the Ergo Soft Poster Print and CADlink Photoscript RIPs for lenticular prints. The Wasatch SoftRIP is used for step and repeat printing control and Macromedia software is used for website development. Most recently, they have been working with 11 different UV cured ink flatbed printers. Visit the Digital Atelier website where you can download a PDF detailing their project on fine art and flatbed printers.

Dorothy Simpson Krause is a Doctor in Education. She has worked with computers since the late 1960s and trained as a painter and collage-maker, incorporating mixed media into her digital images. She was instrumental in 1980 in establishing the Computer Arts Center at the Massachusetts College of Art where she is an Emeritis Professor of Computer Graphics.

"My work uses historical and contemporary images, fragments of written language, signs, symbols, charts and diagrams," says Dorothy Simpson Krause. "For the past decade I have used photographs of people combined with bits of ephemera gathered during everyday life and other copyright free materials." She ritualistically keeps a journal, especially when travelling, recording discussed and visual impressions and this serves as a source and repository for her art.

In her work, Dorothy Simpson Krause manipulates source materials and combines, layers and merges them into images. "My intention is to make statements or raise questions in my mind and the mind of the viewer," she says. "The work is neither narrative nor factual and has no prescriptive message but is truthful in character with the quality of allegory." She focusses on timeless personal and universal issues: hopes and fears; wishes; lies and dreams; immortality and transience; the uses and abuses of power; the dignity of the individual and the strength of the spirit.

Recent digital art from Dorothy Simpson Krause includes Reflective Vision produced in 2005 and Jewel, produced a year earlier.

Reflective Vision uses doors, windows and passageways as the subject matter from a perspective of vision and

illusion whilst the concept behind the series, the vision of the artist, is also reflection and contemplation. "Both physically and metaphorically, we do not see without some form of illumination," she says. "Without light we are in the dark; with light all becomes clear."

Her images of doors, windows and passageways are luminous. Some appear and disappear as if refracted by brilliant sunlight or mirrors. Others softly glow in the surround of shadow. The series is related to earlier work entitled Passages, with digital printing on 24in square aluminium and 36in square translucent banner.

Jewel was produced by Dorothy Simpson Krause following her winter of 2004 in Bombay, Jaipur, Agra, Delhi, Chennai and Goa where she kept a visual journal incorporating collected ephemera. On her return home, she scanned the pages and combined them with photographs taken on the way.

*Works by Bonnie Lhotka. Left: Memories 24 x 24 inches inkjet on translucent plex with acrylic paint*

*Below: Tea-time Ladies. 24 x 32 inches; fresco transfer and collage.*



Handmade brown Indian bagasse with heavily deckled edges, shipped from Jaipur, was cut to simulate the two pages of a book. It was stuck to 24x32in Arches paper with her final images then printed on this chine colle paper using a Vutek PressVu UV 200/600 flatbed printer. Gold and silver leaf, coloured pencil and collage were added to the prints.

Bonny Lhotka graduated in painting and printmaking from Bradley University in 1964. A Macintosh was installed in her studio in 1992 and from there her innovation took on new approaches. Her paintings have been commissioned by or are included in over 100 collections including Lucent Technologies, United Airlines, Johns Space Center, Jones Intercable, Microtek Labs, US Department of State, Charles Schwab, MCI, and McDonnell Douglas.

Bonny Lhotka's art explores the continuum of time. "I gather images by looking closely at them in a historical aspect," she says. "I look for surfaces that reflect the passage of time. Creating the equivalents in paint is a process of exploration as I allow the spontaneous layers of painting to dictate the direction of each piece. By layering images I integrate meanings that invoke a response by the viewer. By looking at the past and responding intuitively I explore the future by applying knowledge of the present."

Deep, rich colour is used by Bonnie Lhotka to express her creative excitement. Her work encompasses everyday objects from the past and present from which she sets out to express and create new meaning. "Through life I gather memories," she says, "and communicate my emotional



Far left: *Early Morning* by Karin Schminke; 30 x 22 inches; inkjet printed on paper with collaged rice paper.

Left: *Galiano* by Karin Schminke; 30 x 22 inches; paint and rice paper layered between a transferred image and an inkjet print.

response through the use of textural surfaces, real and implied. My art is a continuum. It is a non-identical reflection of who I am. Each day adds to and changes my past. My art is who I am. Without it I would cease to exist."

Paper Doll is a 24in square digitally printed artwork by Bonny Lhotka who spent two days at Applied Visual Concepts creating the series of images on a flat bed printer. Eighteen pieces of art were created using the inkjet's capability of printing at up to 140m/hr on material up to 2in thick and up to 84in wide.

Among the materials experimented with were wire screen, lead, steel sheets, copper scraps, wooden boxes, cast paper, ceiling tiles, Plexiglas cylinders sliced in quarters and pre-made Baltic birch frames 1in thick. The UV cured inks used by the flatbed are said to have adhered well to all the substrates used.

For Paper Doll, Bonny Lhotka visited a local antique mall to digitally photograph old dolls and other objects using her Olympus E20. Knowing that the flatbed printer could print on thick, transparent material, Paper Doll was created with the intention of viewing one layer through another. Images of a paper doll and an old box were layered in Photoshop and a dark grid was imaged on the back of a 24in square, 1/4in thick clear Plexiglas sheet, with the doll printed on the front.

"The ink has a physical presence," says Bonny Lhotka, "allowing lighter colours to be imaged on top of the darker colours which is a characteristic not available with any other inkjet technology." The images printed on the back of the Plexiglas are intensely smooth, highly glossed and photographic in appearance. Looking from the imaged side, the inks appear wax-like and have a matte finish. By making use of these characteristics, she was able to enhance the visual and tactile experience of her Paper Doll creation.

The Paper Doll image on the Plexiglas is actually displayed one-inch in front of a mirror which allows the grid to reflect back at the viewer thus giving the appearance of a 2in thick block of glass.

Karin Schminke has an MFA from the University of Iowa where she began working in computer graphics and images in Basic. Since then she has developed and taught digital and traditional art and design classes at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, California State University Northridge, The Art Institute of Southern California, and Shoreline Community College. She has worked on Mindset, IBM, Macintosh and Amiga systems, and delivered regional and national presentations on her work.

"Growing up in a rural area provided ample opportunity to develop a close relationship with nature at a very young age," says Karin Schminke. Then as an adult, living an urban life far from her mid-western rural roots, she would

steal away to the natural environment of her adopted home. "And now my art provides me with a means to capture the essence of the environments I encounter and," she adds, "to share the core of these experiences."

Karin Schminke takes special interest in the beauty found in the humblest of forms. Mountains, animals and redwoods feature in her work together with more modest elements such as leaves, insects and rocks which play an equally substantial role. She combines these elements to reflect her impressions of a place, form or time, transforming them into archetypes for nature as we experience them. Using mixed media Karin Schminke employs layers of imagery in her prints such as chine colle and paint, to replicate layered complexity of the natural world.

Karin Schminke's Calla series is based on Calla lilies that she grew in her garden and from which she made pencil sketches. Large Calla leaves were then scanned directly into her computer using an Epson Expressions 636 in order to create the drawing background. Changing the colours of the scanned images on the computer screen, she then photographed these variations directly off the screen as they were developed as backgrounds for placing behind a particular section of the drawing.

When this was complete, a red version of the leaves was collaged with the drawing and the digital photo and the resultant image then printed on watercolour paper. The edges of the centre panel of the image were taped in preparation for painting which featured a gloss medium with a small amount of gold iridescent acrylic brushed on the surface of the print. This added lustre and enhanced the depth of the image.

The golden layer and the rich velvety red background developed in these stages by Karin Schminke combined, she says, "to reflect the regal nature of the Calla" in the final 10.5x14.5in digitally printed image.

Website: [www.digitalatelier.com](http://www.digitalatelier.com)



Karin Schminke, left; Bonny Lhotka, top right and Dorothy Simpson Krause, below, right.