

Creative Point of View

Photoshop from the creative to the practical

■ BY KATRIN EISMANN

Successful Parallel Careers

Is the grass really greener on the other side? No matter how successful people may be in one career, many daydream about a completely different career in the creative arts. What's the next step and can you hold a day job and lead a fulfilling creative life?

For most of us, daily reality includes raising children, mortgage payments, aging parents, and career obligations. To balance these demands, many of us enjoy creative pursuits including photography, painting, gardening, or visiting museums and galleries. Have you ever wondered, "What would it take to leave your day job and dedicate yourself to making art full-time?" If this seems like a drastic move, consider developing a parallel professional career that allows you to follow your dreams. From doctors and dentists to lawyers and teachers, leading a dual life allows you to experience the best of both worlds: financial security and ongoing creative development.

Photography is a field in which some of its most successful and important practitioners have had parallel professional careers, for example: Augustus Sherman was a registry clerk with the Immigration Division of Ellis Island, who in the early 20th century systematically photographed more than

200 families, groups, and individuals as they were entering the United States. Eliot Porter, a trained biochemist, is well respected for his environmental work and prolific exploration of color photography in landscape photography. Minor White, in addition to being an insightful photographer, was one of the most influential educators, thinkers, and critics in the development of photography as a fine art form in the 1950s and '60s. Teaching is a natural pursuit for many artists and even the elite digital gurus subsidize their creative careers by teaching workshops, writing books, or by promoting and representing a variety of manufacturers' products.

Self-promotion and roles

Here are a couple of suggestions that you might use to promote your work:

Build a Web presence. This can be as simple as posting images on a variety of easy-to-use websites (see "Resources"). Most Web hosting companies offer a wide variety of templates that don't require you to know how to design or code a webpage. You can even post your Photoshop Web Galleries, which are as easy to create: Just go under File and choose Automate>Web Photo Gallery and select a folder of images. A website allows you to offer services or sell prints and, more importantly, begin to test the waters.

Self-publish a book of your work. This is an ideal tool to open doors and further your professional standing. In the past, self-publishing was a costly endeavor but today with digital tools, you can create beautiful Apple iPhoto books, or PC users can work with www.mypublisher.com for less than a dinner and a movie for two. To create stunning personalized inkjet books, check out the "Resources" box.

If you prefer a four-color, hardcover book, consider working with 100 Books Publishing Company (www.my100books.com). As Michael Reichmann of the Luminous Landscape (www.luminous-landscape.com) explains, "This allows photographers to produce a minimum of 100 copies of a 100-page, 9x12" hardcover book for much less than \$10,000—about \$82 per copy if just 100 copies are ordered. If you go to 1,000 copies, the price drops to just \$11.50 per copy. So, if you believe that your book



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has a potential market—and accepting that the final cost for 1,000 copies will likely be closer to \$15,000 when dust-cover art, spine printing, and a few other extras are factored in—this is still a very reasonable price.”

Editing, preparing, and sequencing images for a Web gallery or a book is a challenge that truly focuses you on your work.



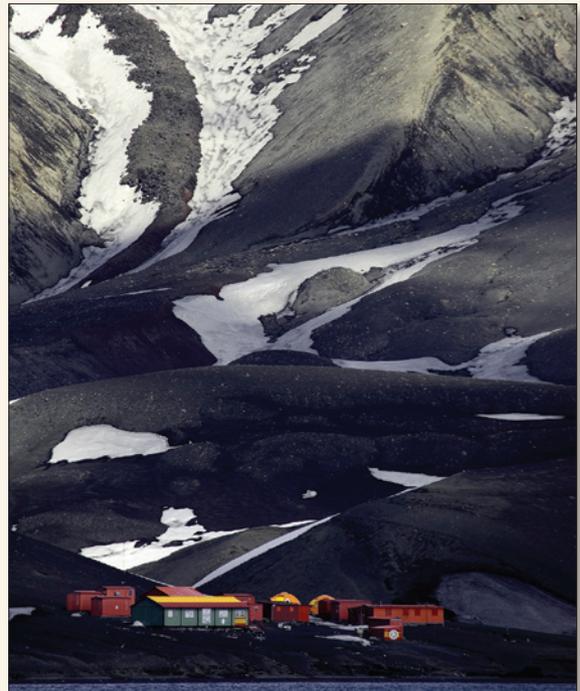
Teach and take workshops. As I mentioned in the “Creative Point of View” column in March, “Many photographers and artists teach workshops, which may be the ideal opportunity for you to explore and expand your technical acumen and creative depth.” And as Mara Kurtz, successful graphic designer, illustrator, and college professor explains, “Taking classes not only teaches you new information, it also provides excellent opportunities for making valuable contacts. Years ago, I took a continuing education class with Milton Glaser at the School of Visual Arts. Shortly after the semester ended, I received a call from a fellow student who turned out to be the art director of *Metropolis Magazine* (www.metropolismag.com). Based on seeing my work in Glaser’s class, she hired me to create a year-long series of collages using my own photographs. This body of work won many awards, appeared in prominent design annuals, and led to many other commissions.”

Give back and commit to your images

Give back by volunteering in a local professional organization or user group. As Mara told me, “After volunteering and then serving on the board of the Type Directors Club for four years, I was elected President of the club. Meeting and developing relationships with many of the leading professional designers has made it possible for me to become involved in yet another kind of work: developing and hosting successful graphic design conferences.”

Become a mentor—sharing, explaining, encouraging, and teaching is one of the most rewarding, challenging, and revealing processes you’ll ever experience. After taking numerous workshops, reading the books, and working on your craft, turn your energies to others and be a mentor, teacher, or workshop leader.

Jed Best, a successful children’s dentist and passionate photographer, shared his thoughts with me: “Having an understanding life partner is essential, as my photography often keeps me away from my family when I take workshops or go on photographic excursions. Understanding that in today’s marketplace, being a photographic professional is



very tough going. For me it’s better to have photography as a passion, not a profession.”

Building a new career takes time, personal and financial commitment, and above all the support of your family and friends. Don’t underestimate or assume anything. Think, discuss, and seek objective input from teachers, mentors, and career counselors. Learn to balance a successful parallel creative career that you’re passionate about. Most importantly, don’t make a career change based on achieving quick financial success.

Do what you love, and success—which can be measured in many different ways—will follow.

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RESOURCES

Web Photo Galleries:

- www.flickr.com
- www.photo.net
- www.photoshoper.com/napmem/gallery

Book publishing resources:

- www.apple.com/ilife/iphoto/features/books.html
- www.wgbooks.com/home.html
- www.cypressalbums.com
- www.zohodesign.com ■ ☞

Katrin Eismann, author of Photoshop Restoration & Retouching and Photoshop Masking & Compositing, and an internationally recognized artist, author, and educator, was recently inducted into the Photoshop Hall of Fame. Check out her websites at www.katrineismann.com.