

craft trend report:

Digital imagery
in art & craft

DIGITAL DEVOTION

Digital photography has revolutionised the way most of us take and store photographs. Home computers have become an essential tool in the studios of most creative people today. The ability to capture original images, or scan existing imagery, change colours, shapes, contents and more and then transfer such images onto all kinds of surfaces is further altering not just the way we make art but also the way we think about it.

Artists and crafters in particular have benefitted from advances in technology because lightweight, user friendly modern cameras can be toted everywhere, making the capturing of inspiring or spontaneous images easy to achieve. As professional Australian photographic artist, Rachel Grieg, says, "It's easy to make photographs, have them printed or print them yourself, or simply just view them on your computer or television. There's many different ways to capture images and to view them now ... there's something to suit everyone."

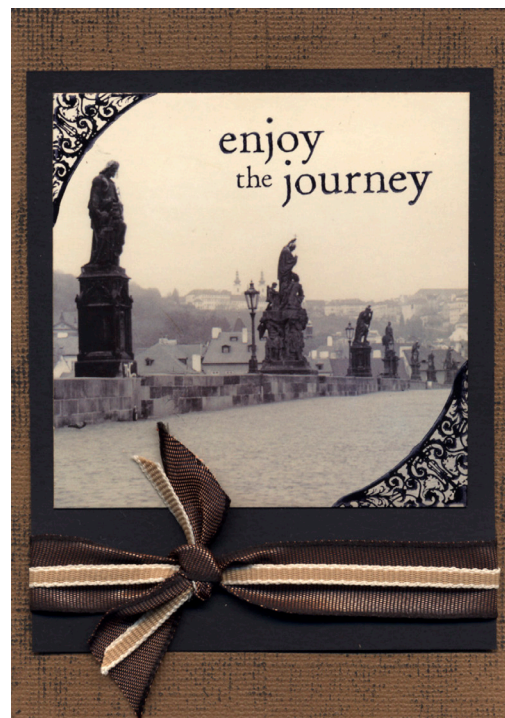
As well as her photography, Rachel has always had a love of "all things paper" which led her to create handmade stationery and greeting cards as well as dabble in book binding, print making and paper making.

These days the interests have really fused with her company, Darkroom Door, producing a wide range of

products suitable for paper craft. These include photochips, montage, filmstrips and wordstrips which are all made from heavy quality card and are very versatile.

Rachel says the photochips are great for the front of greeting cards, journals, scrapbook layouts and in mixed media artworks while the montage images can be used in the same way or smaller images on the montage sheets are well suited for use on Artist Trading Cards, gift cards and other smaller artworks.

"Filmstrips and wordstrips are 12" in length so they can be used as a whole border on a scrapbook layout," she explains. "The filmstrips can be trimmed into singular images or triptychs for use on cards or other embellishments. The wordstrips compliment the photographs with words that relate to each collection. The words can be cut to be used



individually or into little sections."

Also a photographer and artist (not to mention an actor well known for her starring role in the famous 'Lost In Space' television programme), America's Angela Cartwright has explored art in its many forms but understands the "instant gratification" you get with the digital format and the appeal of that." It is hard to resist isn't it? Download your pictures and put them out in the world. But for me," she says, "there is a mood, a magic to celluloid film, which is why I like to use it."

To that end, Angela creates remarkable altered artworks which began when she started hand painting her photographs. "I would shoot black and white film photographs and then hand paint them with oil," she explains. "It's a technique that began when only black and white film was available and they would colour the lips and cheeks on sepia images. That



Rachel Grieg. Opposite: Rachel's 'Prague Card' & 'Wilderness Cards'.



Self portrait by Angela Cartwright. Right: Angela's 'Haven' & 'Crib'. "In art you just have to go for it," she says. "You have to take that leap of faith."



technique took a back seat with the introduction of colour film. Now with the worldwide consumer availability of digital photography, black and white celluloid film is becoming a lost art."

While she continues to shoot and alter black and white film, Angela also "indulges" in the altering of digital photos. "I explore many ways to colour and alter photographs in my book *Mixed Emulsions - Altered Art Techniques for Photographic Imagery*. You can colour with inks, draw and stamp your photographs, tear and embed them. Many people connect with the tactile creation of art. The possibilities are endless and with my book I try to jumpstart the creative process."

Angela clearly enjoys the freedom to experiment and invent that comes from combining old techniques and technologies with new ones. A line of her photographs was released as artist papers by Stampington & Company a few years ago. These papers were devised to be cut, altered, coloured, embedded and used as backgrounds in the user's artwork.

"Then Stampington & Company released a line of my Unruly Girls Club stamps," says Angela. "These doodled women can be used in many fun and creative ways. Unruly Shadows was another collection of rubber stamps released this year. You can stamp them, dress them up, stencil them, enlarge them. The Unruly Shadows line of rubber stamps is taken from images of my own dancing shadow. I use my own shadow often in my altered artwork as a personal element to express myself."

Angela says she was "terrified" the first time she cut up a 20 x 24 hand painted archival printed photograph that she'd spent days painting. "But I put on some music, got in the zone and trusted my instincts," she says. "If I hadn't tried it, if I hadn't listened to that inner voice that urged me to cut up that photograph, I would still be stuck panicking about the blank sheet of paper in front of me."

The ability one has to quickly move digital images from the camera to the computer where they can be played with or altered for use in paper, textile and countless other art mediums, is a creative paradise. People are printing digital images onto fabrics, creating their own stationery, making stamps, jewellery, collage and more.

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- Angela

Lynn Koolish has co-authored two books on printing on fabric - *More Photo Fun* and *Innovative Fabric Imagery* and she has her own DVD called 'Lynn Koolish Teaches You Printing on Fabric'. Lynn says she really became aware of the potential of digital printing on fabric when her publisher, C&T, started working on the first *Photo Fun* book in 2003.

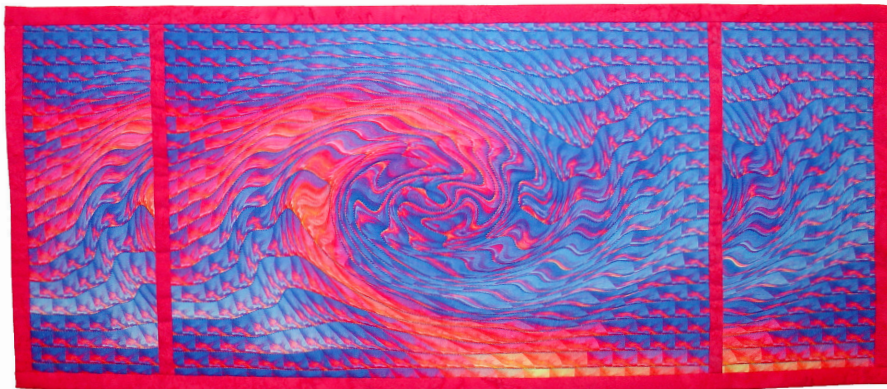
"I didn't work on that book, but I was aware of what was going on with it, and was starting to get intrigued," says Lynn who says she's been sewing since she was old enough to sit at a



machine and whose hand-dyed and painted fabrics are incorporated into quilts ranging in style from "not-quite-traditional to definitely-an-art quilt".

In 2004 C&T asked her to work on a new book, *More Photo Fun*. It was then that Lynn says she "really dove in and started experimenting with techniques and ideas". "I'd been using an old version of Photoshop which can be a bit challenging, but when I discovered Photoshop Elements and found out how easy it was to use, I really had a ball trying things out."

The first quilt that Lynn made using photos printed on fabric was in 2000 and was titled *Vacation Memories*. "I had signed up for a fabric postcard workshop and we were supposed to bring a small photo printed on fabric to use in a postcard," she remembers. "As I was looking through my digital photos I found three that had been taken of a giant redwood tree in Sequoia National Park; the tree was so tall that it took three photos to get it



Left: 'Tsunami Sunset'.
Below: 'Palm Bowl',
both by Lynn Koolish.
Right: Lynn & her book
titles.



all. Everyone in the class was making little 4" x 6" or 5" x 7" quilts. I've never been very good at following directions so I brought my photos that I'd printed out at 8" x 10" and made a quilt that was about 16" wide and 40" tall."

Like many textile artists, the digital camera has become like another limb to Lynn who carries one wherever she goes. "I take pictures of things that are intriguing because of the colour, texture, or composition, or just because I think something is interesting. For those who want to print on fabric, taking lots of pictures provides lots of images and inspiration," she says.

Asked if you have to be something of a 'crafty geek' to master printing on to fabrics, Lynn says: You can be as technical as you want to be. You can simply print photos or other digital images on fabric just as you would print them on paper or there's an almost unlimited number of ways that you can use a computer and software to manipulate images.

"I use Photoshop Elements. It's an inexpensive software program that is easy to learn and it allows you to either subtly manipulate digital images or totally transform them into something completely different ... Most of the printing I do is on a regular all-in-one printer that you can buy at an office supply store."

Lynn believes that fibre and paper art is most successful when the images are fully integrated into the work, something that takes a bit of thought. "It's also important to use good quality fabric so you get a good quality printout," she advises.



She says the new techniques appeal to creative people because they can produce personal, unique, and striking imagery that can't be created in any other way. "When you're using your own photographs, you can make things that no one else can," says Lynn.

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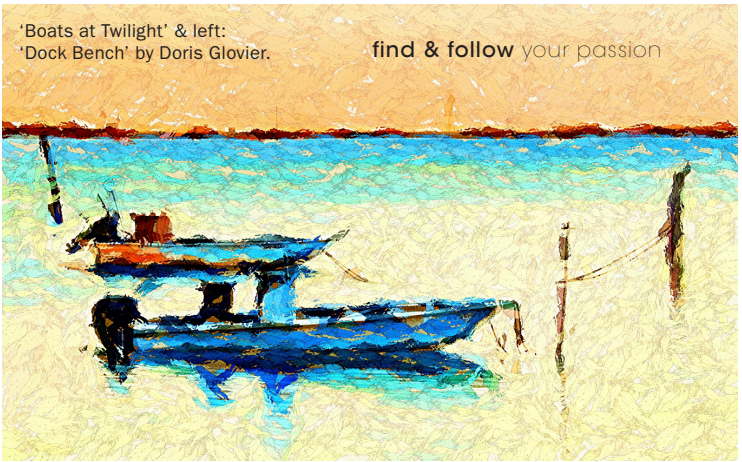
Just such a creative person is Doris Glover, a trained professional artist who works in oils and water colours but also includes digital photography in her repertoire. Based on the USA's east coast, between Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, Doris is surrounded by desirable images to photograph or paint. Today she says she enjoys digitally altering and enhancing her photography and images of her own paintings.

"The process involves a complex series of creative modifications and the end result is not easily duplicated," she explains. "As a matter of fact, once a project is completed, even I cannot exactly replicate the same result. As

a working artist, my understanding of colour theory, compositional issues and other facts all come into play with my digital artwork."

Doris says she always had an interest in photography as a hobbyist but, several years ago, she decided to upgrade her "point and shoot digital camera" to a larger Nikon digital camera for use in her arts and craft design work. Now, after "realising the importance of high quality images for painting reference" she owns a Nikon D40X SLR, with several lenses. This purchase marked the period when she "really got serious and began to learn about photography in earnest and the quality of my work vastly improved".

"I am most excited by the digital alteration of my own paintings," she explains. "Creating the painting is definitely an enjoyable journey in itself, one that I am often sad to finish ... The added dimension of digital modification just takes the artistic experience in a new direction. The marketability of that digital variation is definitely a plus. I also feel gratified that the originality of those digital artworks is unique and more my own artistic expression given that the work begins with my paint brush. Of course, not all of my paintings make good



'Boats at Twilight' & left:
'Dock Bench' by Doris Glover.

find & follow your passion

candidates for digital artwork."

As Doris observes, "The digital age has spawned a generation of new crafters who long to create but have little time to involve themselves in traditional arts and crafts. Today the busy crafter can tap into the intrinsic desire to create while producing digitally influenced scrapbooks, memory quilts, personalised totes and home décor items."

Doris says she's been touched by digital quilting that incorporates poignant images recalling important events, places and individuals, creating an emotional response in the viewer. She says that probably "the most important digital work" she has personally done to date was on a photo of a tiny premature infant weighing less than two pounds. "My work involved the digital removal of all of the tape, tubes and other medical objects from his fragile body so that his family could have a photo that was not dominated by evidence of his critical condition," she recalls.

It's exactly this scope and potential provided by digital technology that makes it so exciting. Angela Cartwright has a new clothing line called 'ac studio 9' that includes garments with her photographic images printed directly on the fabric. Rachel Greig is playing around with Polaroid transfers and cyanotypes because "an image can be totally transformed in a new way just by using a different printing technique".

Lynn Koolish knows amazing works of art are being created with digital printing on fabric. She was involved in a book called *Innovative Fabric*

Imagery. "We did a call for entries for digitally created fibre works that would be used in the book and also in a special exhibit at the Quilt Market and Festival in Houston in 2007," she says. "We received over 250 entries and could only select 50. This book is still a great way to see a fabulous selection of work all in one place."

Tips from Doris Glover on working with digital photographs

- If you are digitally altering photographs, it is critically important to use good quality, large images.
- Never use someone else's photography to digitally alter and call it your own digital artwork. The only time I do this is when I am commissioned to create art from a client's photo or in creating a gift that requires the recipient's photos.
- Use the best quality components and supplies that you can afford. For example, in your paper crafting, only use archival products. This is important in creating projects that will last even more than a lifetime.
- Learn some of the facts about composition and colour theory. The knowledge will greatly enhance the future outcome of your creative pursuits.

find out more

Angela Cartwright

- www.acartwrightstudio.com
- www.acartwrightstudio.blogspot.com
- www.acstudio9.com
- The Pasticcio Quartz zine can be

purchased online at www.lulu.com/cartwrightandfishburn
• Her books can be purchased at www.acartwrightstudio.com/publications.htm

Rachel Greig

- Darkroom Door will release new products this month. Rachel is in Europe in February 2010 teaching at the Stitches Show in Birmingham and other locations.
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Doris Glover

- Doris' paintings, photography and digital artwork can be viewed online at www.dorisglover.com or at shows and galleries on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia. She teaches at The Delmarva Discovery Centre, a local museum and in Chincoteague, VA. She is also a staff writer for www.EmptyEasel.com.
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