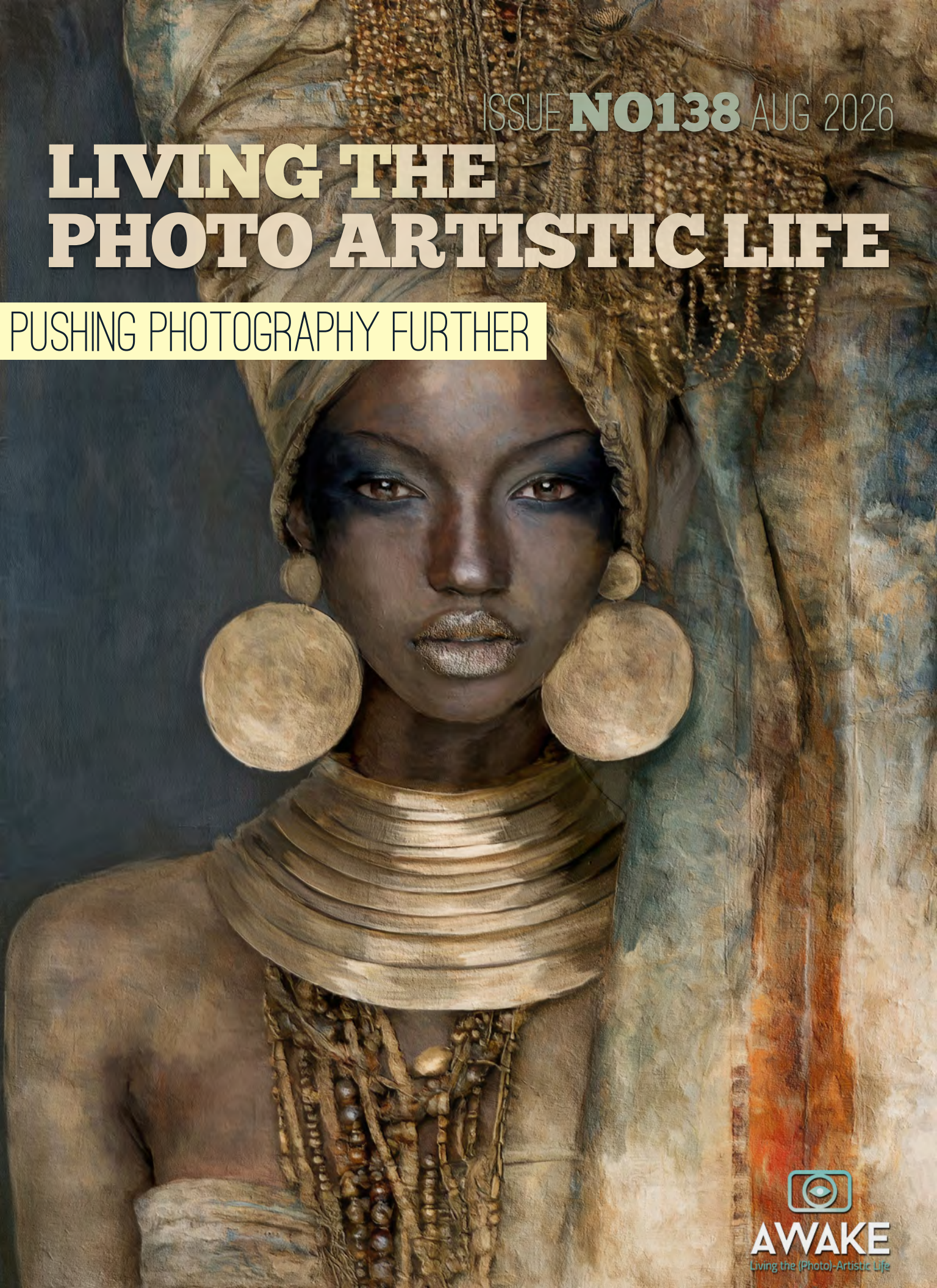




ISSUE **N0138** AUG 2026

LIVING THE PHOTO ARTISTIC LIFE

PUSHING PHOTOGRAPHY FURTHER



AWAKE
Living the (Photo)-Artistic Life

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

SEBASTIAN MICHAELS

Ever wonder what it is that sets talented, prolific artists apart from the rest?

I've watched so many amazing artists flourish over the years — and published so much of their work here — and I'm always looking for clues as to what it is that makes them so inspired and inspiring.

One answer is right there in the original question. Talented, prolific artists often become talented *by being so prolific*. Simple and true. Create a lot of art over time and you'll probably get good.

But what is it that allows someone to put in all that work early on and stick with it long enough to *get* good?

I've become convinced it comes down to one thing above all else, and it's at the core of what I believe makes so many of our most creative minds so cheerfully productive:

It is the ability to have creative thoughts . . . and *not fall into the trap of thinking about those thoughts*.

That probably sounds crazy, but hear me out.

The artist who is going to keep on keeping on is the one who pulls up a photo or image and thinks, "I could make something with this" . . . and then simply dives in and gets to work.

Faltering creatives have a hard time creating because, while they have that same initial thought, they immediately follow it up with thinking it to death — usually beginning with a big old BUT.

They'll think: "I bet this photo would make for a cool composition . . . *but* even if I had enough time, it's never going to turn out as good as the ones in the magazine."

Or: "I should try to create something like what's in that tutorial . . . *but* I don't have a starting image like that to work with and wouldn't know what more to add to it anyway."

Imagine if instead you replaced the BUT with a series of ANDs.

Like this: "That image is amazing — I should try something like that. And I have a photo in here I can at least start with . . . and maybe I could bring in one of those new textures I downloaded today . . . and I bet if I journal a little during lunch I can come up with a story to work in . . . and this would be the perfect opportunity to try out what I learned in that tutorial I just saw . . . *and, and, and . . .*"

A "BUT" will get you thinking too much about your initial thought and send you spiraling into negativity and self-doubt.

An "AND" opens the creative floodgates.

We must learn to shake off the self-doubt invoked by overthinking and refuse to let a BUT derail us.

We must meet a creative idea instead with a simple "Yeah. I'm going to try that." And then see where it leads.

That's what our best artists do again and again.

~ Sebastian

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

004 PENNY DE JONG
 005 DORI FLEMING
 006 CHERYL PARRIS
 007 JOHN MOLINO
 008 SANDRA DANN
 009 MARGO REASNER
 010 MAGGY R. THORVALDSDOTTIR PEASE
 011 ANITA HUBBARD
 012 KAREN SORRELLS
 013 JEAN HUTTER
 014 JANICE S. BATTERBEE
 015 NINA IRVIN
 016 MARGARET WER
 017 MARIE FARMER
 018 SUE WATERHOUSE
 019 TERRI BUTLER
 020 DAN LAVERY
 021 DONNA ELLIOT
 022 DOREEN FAIELLO
 023 GITAMA DAY
 024 DOV FUCHS
 025 LUANA LAUBSCHER
 026 MARY ANN ROESLER
 027 CATHERINE KING
 028 JO CRANE
 029 INGRID POMEROY
 030 BARBARA A LANE
 031 KRISTIN COUCH
 032 DIANE EASTHAM
 033 LARRY BUCKLEY
 034 MARIETJIE DU TOIT
 035 RENEE PHOENIX
 036 DON SCHIFFNER
 037 MERRILEE SOBERG

038 MARILYN SUMNER
 039 NANCIE ROWAN
 040 CATHY LABUDAK
 041-045 **FEATURED ARTIST:
 JILL JOHNSON**
 046 BOB DESILETS
 047 ILONA ABOU-ZOLOF
 048 VIV BUCKLEY
 049 CHRISTINA BRUNTON
 050 MARK HEMSTREET
 051 MARIUS ELS
 052 MARK LUTNES
 053 LINDA CARRUTH
 054 PEGGY GATTO
 055 NANCY BRIZENDINE
 056 BEVERLY EVERSON
 057 JOYCE SIMPSON
 058 LOUISE SMITH
 059 ASHBY PRESLEY
 060 DAVE HATTORI
 061 CJ SHANK
 062-063 MARIE OTERO
 064 DENISE HUNTER LOGAN
 065 RACHELLE R. VETTER
 066 ROBZ LIPNER
 067 AUGUST NAUDE
 068 DONNA WATERSON
 069 SHELLEY BENJAMIN
 070 MATTHEW BERBERICH
 071 REBECAH THOMPSON
 072 DIANA HARONIS
 073 VICKI ARDOIN
 074 LOU ANN DONAHUE
 075 JOY BUCKLEY FLYNN

076 MAXI BALCER
 077 PAMELA WALDER
 078 HELGA BLANKE
 079 SCOTT CLEMENTS
 080 DENISE MCDERMOTT
 081 JULIE MAE THIES
 082 PAULA D POWERS
 083 DIANE PINSART
 084 RANDY J. LAGANA
 085 KAREN R. HANRON
 086 SUSAN BAILEY
 087 SUE JOESTEN MERRITT
 088 JOHN SCHULTZ
 089 SUSAN PULASKI
 090 DAN BORGE
 091 ROSA PERRY
 092 BARBARA MIERAU-KLEIN
 093 S. H. LAYRE
 094 PIERRE PEVSNER
 095 PAULINE VAN DER SPUY
 096 TRACY COOPER
 097 LINDA LEWIS
 098 MAUREEN MAXWELL
 099 BOB RUDE
 100 ESTHER BYRT
 101 DEBORAH MORRISON
 102 KEITH G. HAWLEY
 103 ANN LAVIN

104-111 **CONTRIBUTING DESIGNERS
 SPOTLIGHT**

FRONT COVER & BACKGROUND IMAGE
 JILL JOHNSON



AWAKE
 Living the (Photo)-Artistic Life



Whispers Beneath a Blood Moon

Penny de Jong
(Australia)



Dori Fleming
(UK)

Companions to the Fire Horse



Butterflies

When the
Moon Bloomed



Cheryl Parris
(USA)

<http://www.cherylparris.com/>

The Keeper of
Lost Stars





**Late Summer
Blue**

John Molino
(USA)



Time is Ticking

Sandra Dann
(Australia)

<https://www.sandradimagery.com/>



Film Cowboy



Margo Reasner
(USA)

Preparing the Potion



Magpie Goose

Maggy R.
Thorvaldsdottir Pease
(USA)

<https://maggy.myportfolio.com/>

Larry the Llama





The Snake Charmer

Anita Hubbard
(Canada)

<https://digartography.pixels.com/>



Horse of a Different Color

Karen Sorrells
(USA)



Love Left Unspoken



Jean Hutter
(USA)

@jeanhutter1

Snapshot



A Family Gathering

Janice S. Batterbee
(Spain)

@janicebatterbee1695

Just Dreaming





Nina Irvin
(USA)

Floral Flamingo



The Wall

Margaret Weir
(Canada)



City of Dreams

Marie Farmer
(USA)



AI Bots' Day Off

Sue Waterhouse
(England)



Terri Butler
(USA)

Industrial Dialogue



In a Hurry



Dan Lavery
(Canada)

<http://danlaveryartist.ca/>

On the Cusp of
Consciousness





Shattered Light, Golden Flight

Donna Elliot
(USA)

<http://donnaelliot.slickpic.com/>



The Emissary

Doreen Faiello
(USA)



**Birdhouse Hat Competition
Finalist (Series)**

Gitama Day
(Australia)

An Odyssey
in a Suitcase



Dov Fuchs
(Israel)

<http://www.dovfuchs.art/>

The Shrine
of the Book





The Sea Goddess

Luana Laubscher
(South Africa)

@luanalaubscher



The Blue Lady's Sanctuary

Mary Ann Roesler
(USA)

<https://roeslerwings.wixsite.com/fine-art-photography>



A Heart of
Stained Glass



Catherine King
(USA)

<http://ckingfineart.com/>

Once A Clown



A Night at the Theatre

Jo Crane (Just Josie Photography)
(UK)





Gothic Clowns

Ingrid Pomeroy
(USA)



Floral Whispers of Sapphire

Barbara A Lane
(USA)

<https://barbaraalane.com/>



The Kingpin



Kristin Couch
(Sweden)

<http://www.kcart.se/>

Blush Mirage



I've Got My Eye on You!

Diane Eastham
(Canada)

<https://diane-eastham.pixels.com/>

She Carried Yesterday
with Remarkable Grace





Wind Swept

Larry Buckley
(USA)

<http://www.bylarrywbuckleyphotography.com/>



Into the Frame

Marietjie du Toit
(South Africa)

<https://marietjiedutoit.myportfolio.com/>



The Scenic Route



Renee Phoenix
(USA)

<http://www.reneephoenix.com/>

Not Perfect



The Seamstress

Don Schiffner
(USA)



36 Blue Herons



Read and Relax Retreat



Sundance

Merrilee Soberg
(Canada)



Time is Watching

Marilyn Sumner
(USA)



A Handful
of Dreams



Nancie Rowan
(USA)

Lemonade
Days

Gramma's Secret Weapon



Cathy Labudak
(USA)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/clabudak/>

The Last Look



FEATURED ARTIST

Zill
Johnson



Ravages of Time

“ Art . . . my way of communicating without words. I can explore my ideas, express my emotions and tell my stories. ”



Working Together

“ I have made amazing friends from around the globe. Without that support and inspiration I might have given up long ago. Instead, I have managed to take small steps forward in artistic and technical improvements over the years. The group welcomed me and embraced my painting style right from the beginning. ”



The Secret



Vantage
Point



Elephant in
the Room



Water
Flower



Fresh Roasted

Zill
Johnson
(USA)





Mountain Falls



Ilona Abou-Zolof
(Australia)

<https://gigglegallery.design/>

Coastal Bloom

Submerged
Chrysanthemum



Viv Buckley
(Ireland)

<http://www.vivbuckley.com/>

Underwater Lillies





Aboriginal Lass

Christina Brunton
(Australia)

<https://chrisbrunton.com/>



Mary Gold

Mark Hemstreet
(USA)



L'Exposition
De Paris



Marius Els
(UK)

<https://mariuselsphotoartistry.com/>

Hidden Grace



Meeting

Mark Lutnes
(USA)

Flu Season





Dieselpunk Dimension

Linda Carruth
(USA)

<https://linda-carruth.pixels.com/>



Crossroad

Peggy Gatto
(USA)



Nancy Brizendine
(USA)

What's for Dinner?



<https://www.facebook.com/nbrizphotoart>

Wicked Chickens

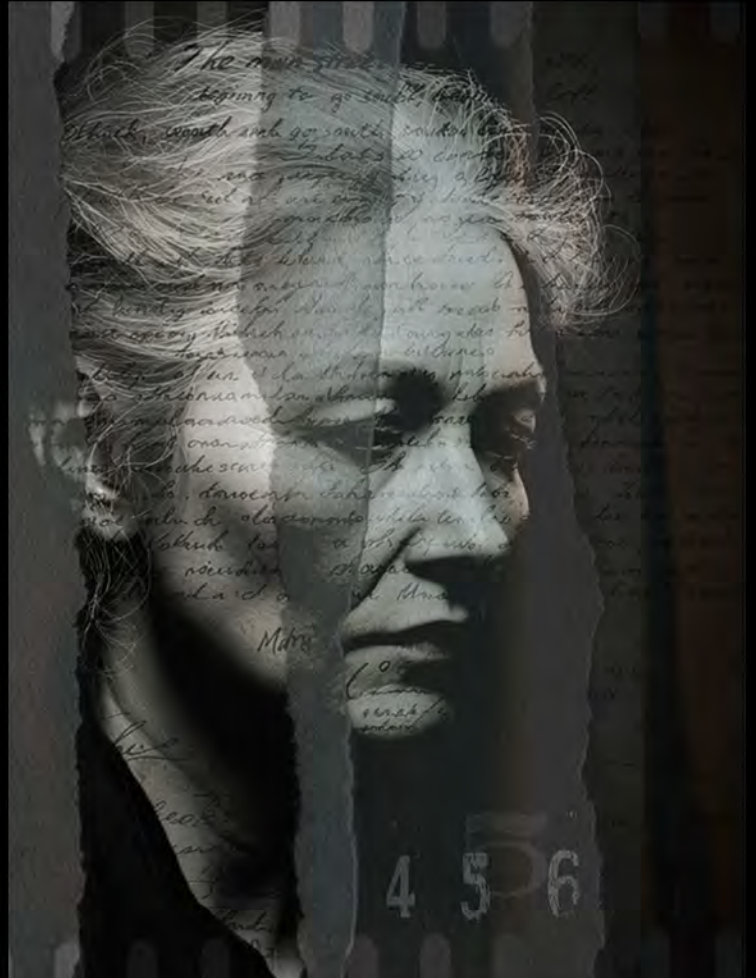


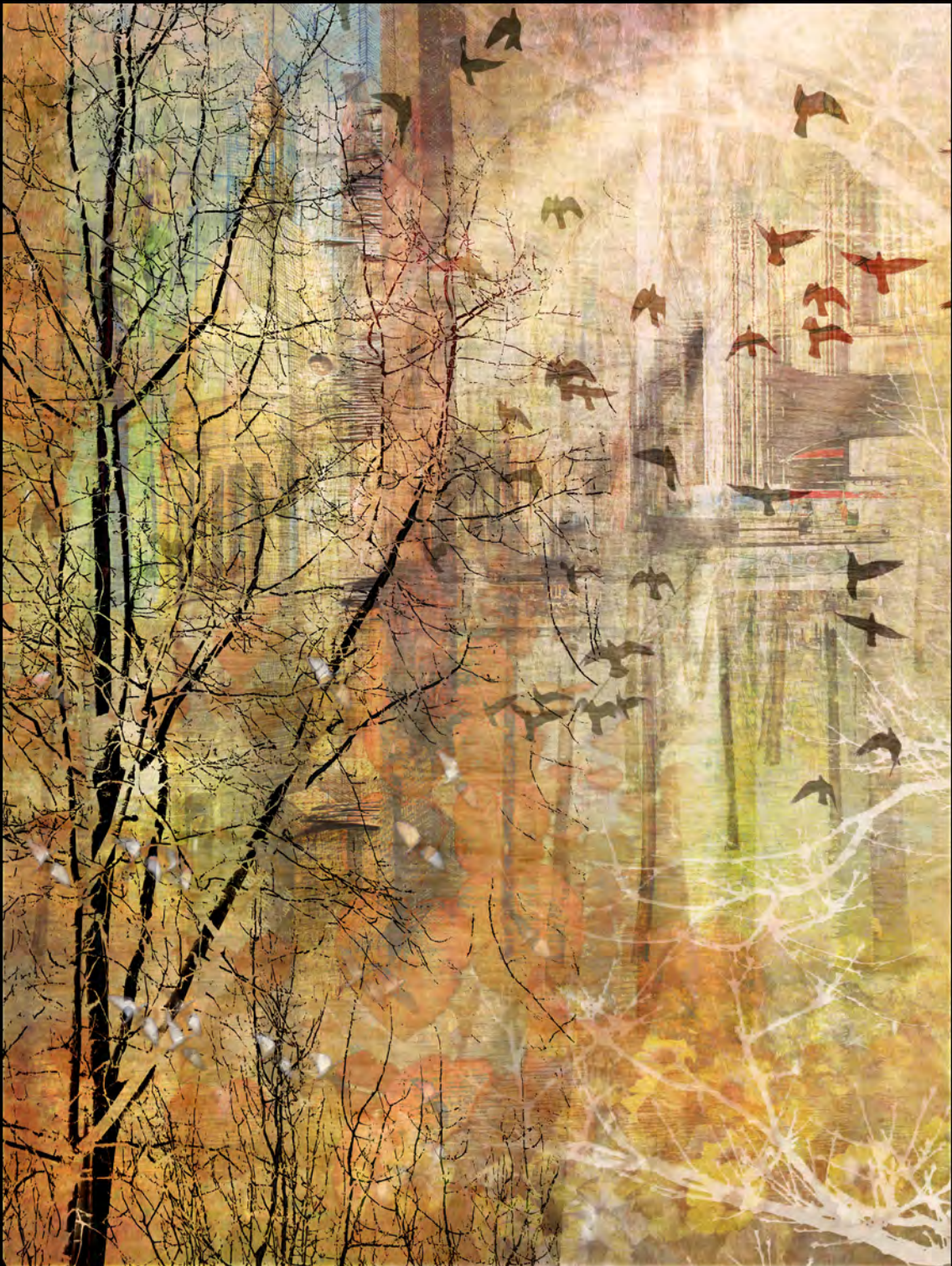
Yesterday's Light

Beverly Everson
(USA)

<http://www.eversonphotography.com/>

Imprisoned by the Past





The Gathering of Wings

Joyce Simpson
(UK)

<https://joycesimpson.myportfolio.com/>



Prince of the Forest

Louise Smith
(Australia)



The Bauhaus Beauties



Ashby Presley
(USA)

<http://www.ash3photography.com/>

The Press Photographer



Grackle

<http://www.davehattoriphoart.com/>

Dave Hattori
(USA)

Silent Stare





Wonderment

CJ Shank
(USA)

<https://tothetopcj.myportfolio.com/>





Mermaid Dreaming

Marie Otero
(Australia)

<http://www.marieotero.com/>



The Keeper

Denise Hunter Logan
(Australia)



Sweet Dreams



Rachelle R. Vetter
(USA)

Cosmic Realms

The Geometry of Sound



Robz Lipner
(South Africa)

<http://www.robzartworx.com/>

Three Moves from Madness





The Mistake

August Naude
(South Africa)

<https://www.augustnaudephotography.com/>



Just Breathe

Donna Waterson
(USA)



Summer Days



Shelley Benjamin
(USA)

Season of the
Sunflower

The Sentinel



Matthew Berberich
(USA)

The Storm's
Witness





Clear View

Rebecah Thompson
(USA)

<http://www.rebecahthompson.com/>



Guardians of the Forest

Diana Haronis
(USA)

<http://www.dianasphotoart.com/>



Surrounded With Nature



Vicki Ardoyn
(USA)

<https://vickiardoinfineart.com/>

Putting Up a Brave Front

Going Nowhere



Lou Ann Donahue
(USA)

No One Lives Here Anymore





Time Under Crows

Joy Buckley Flynn
(Ireland)



The Scarlet Moons

Maxi Balcer
(USA)



The Measure
of the Lake



Pamela Walder
(UK)

The Oddlife
Photographer

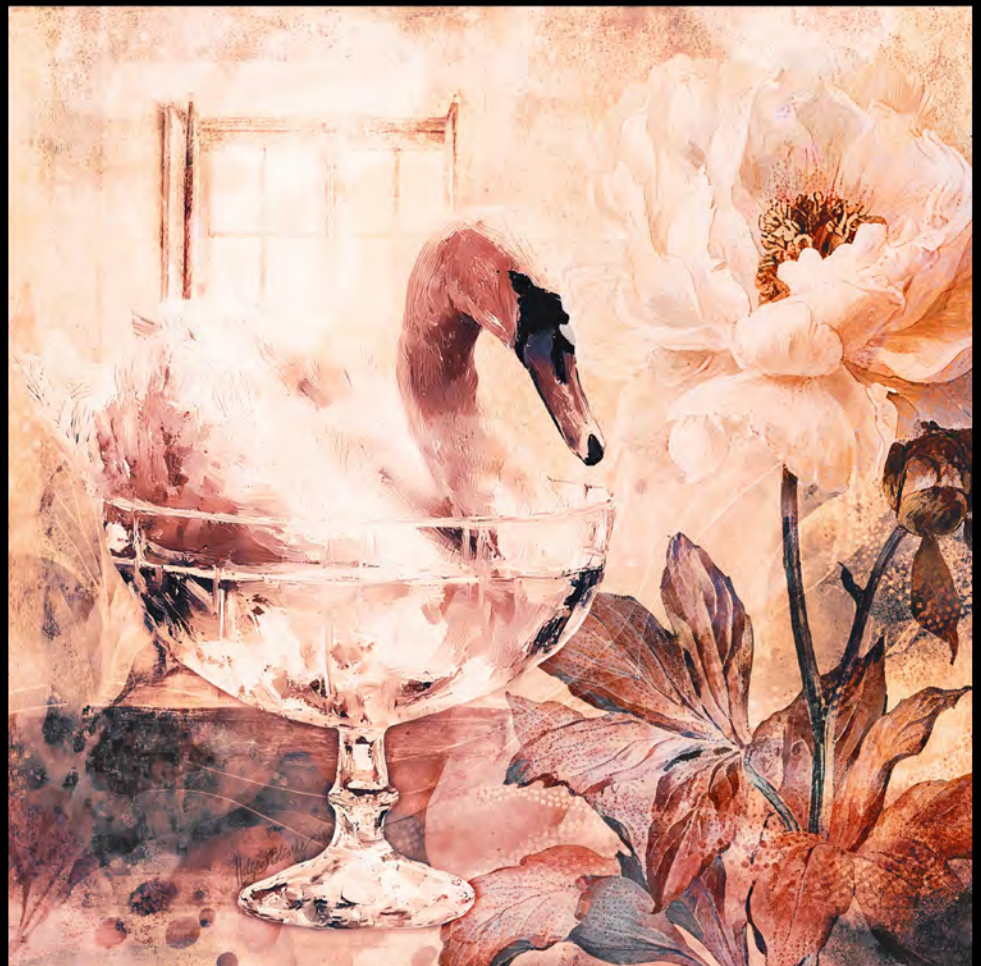


Longing for Peace

<https://www.helgablanke.com/>

Helga Blanke
(The Netherlands)

Taking a
Cocktail Bath





Beach Day

Scott Clements
(USA)

<https://clements-images.com/>



Quiet Expectation

Denise McDermott
(Australia)



Julie Mae Thies
(USA)

Tidewalkers



@teasingimages

Sleepy Valley



Echoes of Time

Paula D Powers
(USA)

<http://www.pauladpowers.com/>

Dragon Courage





Diane Pinsart
(USA)

Summer Portrait



Mistress of Magic

Randy J. Lagana
(USA)

<http://www.randylagana.com/>



Majesty



Karen R. Hanron
(USA)

<https://www.karenhanron.com/>

Presence



African Daisies

Susan Bailey
(USA)

Tulips





Up Up and Away

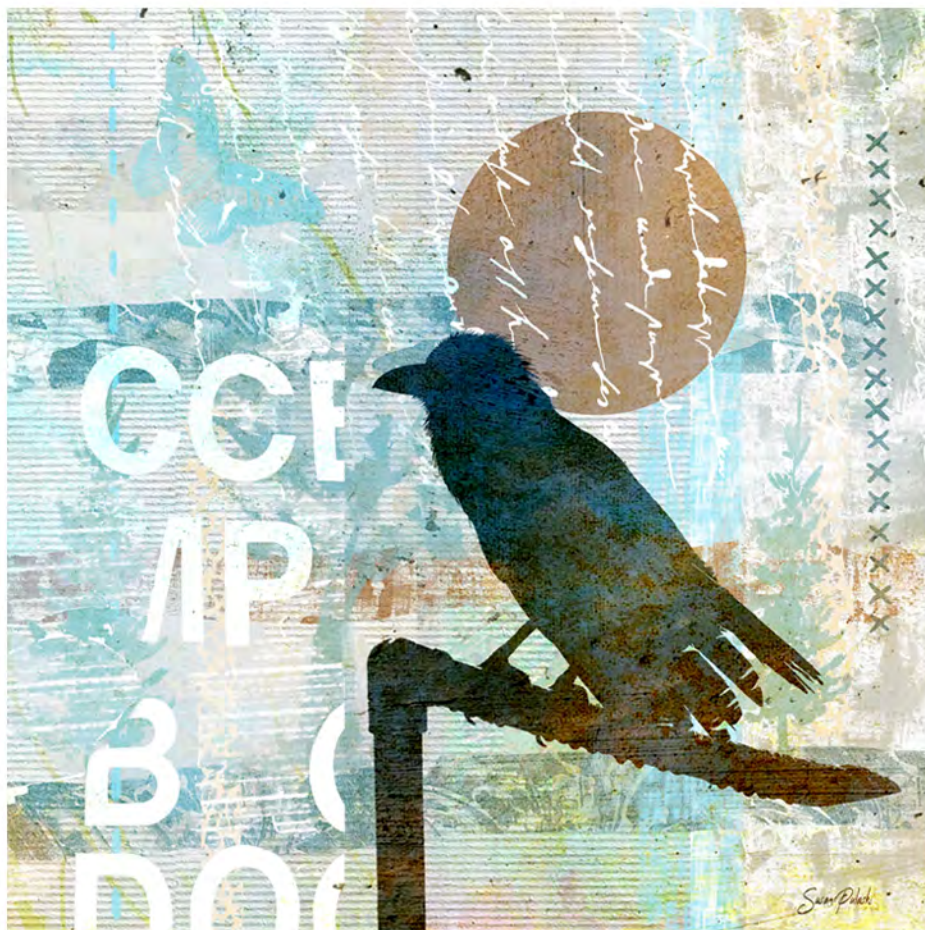
Sue Joesten Merritt
(USA)

<https://suemerrittphotography.com/>



Hitting the Jackpot

John Schultz
(USA)



The Lonely Crow



Susan Pulaski
(USA)

No Parking



Accent of Man

Dan Borge
(USA)



90 After Magritte



Tug at the Edge

Rosa Perry
(Australia)

<https://rosa-perry.myportfolio.com/>



Chinese Village

Barbara Mierau-Klein
(USA / Germany)

<http://www.barbaramierauklein.com/>



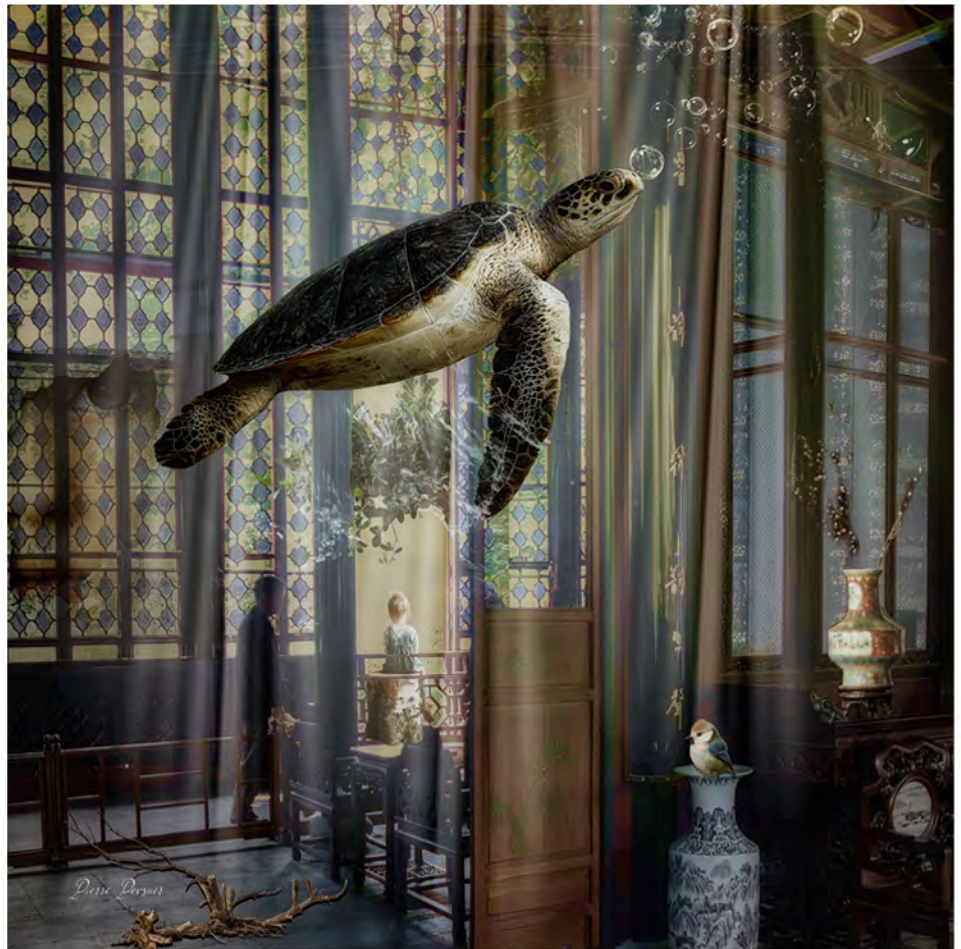
Under a
Strawberry Moon



S. H. Layre
(USA)

The Standoff

Visiting the Underworld



Pierre Pevsner
(France)

<http://pierrepevsner.com/>

Tidal Wave of the Chinese Empire





No Turning Back

Pauline van der Spuy
(South Africa)



Whispers, from The Hair Follies

Tracy Cooper
(Portugal)

@tracycooper0825



Being and
Becoming



Linda Lewis
(USA)

<http://www.lindalewis.net/>

Dance Studio

Evacuated



Maureen Maxwell
(Australia)

The One Stop
Spy Shop





Walking Down the Farm Lane

Bob Rude
(USA)



A Quiet Morning

Esther Byrt
(Canada)

<http://www.estherbyrt.ca/>



Standing Tall



Deborah Morrison
(USA)

FB: Deb Penland Photography

Emptiness

Silence



Keith G. Hawley
(Australia)

The Light Keeper





Alone with Her Thoughts

Ann Lavin
(Australia)

CONTRIBUTING DESIGNERS

"AWAKE" : LIVING THE PHOTO ARTISTIC LIFE

Amanda Rockwell

<http://www.brushworkshop.com>

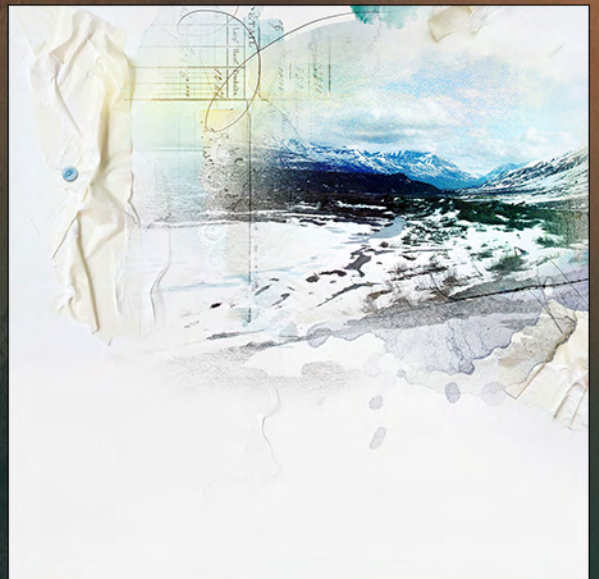
A professional designer with ScrapbookGraphics, Amanda Rockwell creates fantastic content for the AWAKE and KAIZEN groups. But I think her greatest contribution is in encouraging digital artists to get away from their screens and break out the art supplies now and then and actually have fun creating their own custom brushes.



Anna Aspnes

<http://annaaspnesdesigns.com>

Again and again in the work of my top students I was seeing one name turn up constantly when they were citing the source of the artistic content in their work: Anna Aspnes. When I visited her website I was stunned, and when I saw her work in *Somerset Digital Studio* magazine I knew that this was a talent I needed on my team.



Art House Whimsy

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/arthousewhimsy>

Tracy Pitchforth is the artist and designer behind Art House Whimsy. Digital art has been a huge part of her life for over a decade – with it bringing much friendship, inspiration and joy. She has embraced the world of AI as a creative partner. When used thoughtfully, it is powerful tool that enhances the artistic process and makes creativity more accessible for everyone.



Caroline Julia Moore

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/HiraethMacabre>

Over the past many years, I've watched as the immensely talented Caroline Julia Moore shifted from cognitive neuropsychologist to full-time self-employed artist and conceptual photographer ... all while also launching a successful content-design business. Her contributions to the group have been a delight and an inspiration.



CONTRIBUTING DESIGNERS

"AWAKE" : LIVING THE PHOTO ARTISTIC LIFE

Denise Love

<http://2lilowls.com>

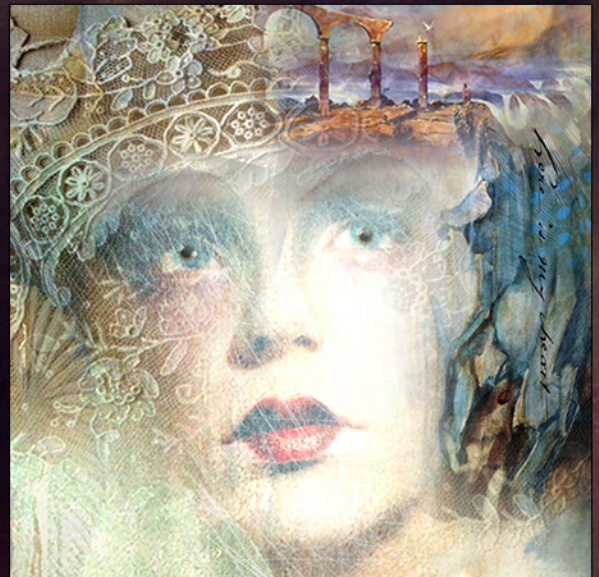
The textures and backgrounds from 2 Lil' Owls are some of the finest in the digital art industry, and indeed many of the works in this magazine feature Denise's textures – often several in one piece. Without question the photo-artistic community is so much the richer for the love and care Denise brings to her designs.



Foxeysquirrel

<http://www.foxeysquirrel.com>

Immensely popular (and stunningly prolific), Foxeysquirrel is the name by which artist Teddi Rutschman is known around the world. Her artistic design kits bring together a wide range of styles – from the enchanted and purely whimsical to classic illustration, from the exquisitely ornate to elements with touches of dreamlike old world mastery.



itKuPiLLi

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/itKuPiLLiimagenarium>

itKuPiLLi is the rather unusual name donned by Kirsi Rouvinen, the celebrated digital artist from Finland. The itKuPiLLi Imagenarium at MischiefCircus.com is a source for whimsical digital goodies, and the content Kirsi creates for our KAIZEN group is always greeted with excitement and enthusiasm.



Jai Johnson

<http://www.DailyTexture.com>

Jai Johnson is a fine artist and the acclaimed designer behind "The Daily Texture." Time and again when a work of digital artistry caught my eye, I'd find Jai's name listed in the credits as the texture designer. It took some time to get her, but I'm extremely excited to now have Jai an active member of our KAIZEN design team.



CONTRIBUTING DESIGNERS

"AWAKE" : LIVING THE PHOTO ARTISTIC LIFE

Jen Maddocks
<http://jenmaddocks.com>

When some students introduced me to the work of Jen Maddocks, I was quite knocked flat. Here was a digital content creator who was as fabulous an artist as she was a designer. We are lucky to have her in our community and MORE than lucky to have her material and tutorials here in "AWAKE" and "KAIZEN."



Jill Catrinel
<https://www.etsy.com/shop/JillCatrinel>

Jill Catrinel works out of her art studio just north of Asheville, making her one of the few designers here quite close to me. Her work is fresh and inspired, and it's exciting to look ahead to everything I will be able to coordinate with her as the projects in the "KAIZEN" group evolve over the year ahead.



Julie Mead

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/JulieMeadDesigns>

It's always exciting to see creatives success stories, and Julie Mead has certainly become one! She stepped into the digital content scene not long ago it seems, but rapidly brought on a bunch of great designers (and of course created a wonderful stream of original content herself.) We're incredibly grateful to have her on our team!



Marius Els

<https://www.mariuselsphotoartistry.com/>

Marius Els is a digital artist residing in the vibrant city of London. He brings to his craft a unique blend of creative experiences. The creation of his intricate elements is a labor of love. He aspires to provide fellow artists with access to these elements, hoping to evoke the same joy he experiences when exploring a brand-new designer collection.



CONTRIBUTING DESIGNERS

"AWAKE" : LIVING THE PHOTO ARTISTIC LIFE

Miles Beyond The Moon

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/MilesBeyondTheMoon>

Mary Bailey is the artist behind Miles Beyond the Moon. She is a digital and paper crafting artist with a vintage soul. Inspired by the details of everyday life, she creates digital graphics that reflect her love for nature, books, whimsy, and adventure. Through attention to detail and an imaginative approach, her hope is to inspire her fellow digital artists to infuse their own artistic creations with a touch of magic.



Rebecca McMeen

<http://www.rebeccamcmeen.com/>

Joining our team just this year, Rebecca McMeen has proven a tremendous hit with her extraordinary material, all of it so rich and complex, whimsical and artistic. Her unique style has made for a fantastic addition to the library of content our artists are now able to employ, and the resulting creations are endlessly charming.



Tangie Baxter

<https://shoptangiebaxter.com/>

Tangie Baxter is the lead artist of her own wildly successful design company with over a decade spent as dedicated “purveyors of digital art journaling supplies.” Her material is quirky and fun, and always a delight. Bringing her onto our team was a big event for us. Everything here got a lot more exciting with her arrival!



The Colby Files

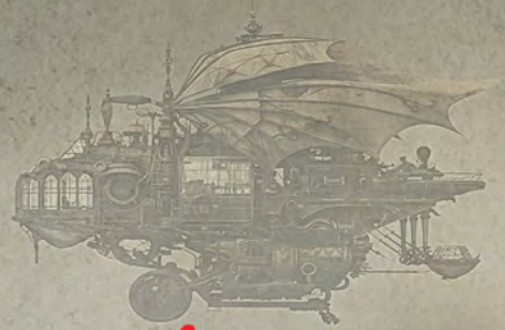
The Colby Files is the intriguing moniker of a celebrated professional photographer located in Scottsdale, Arizona, specializing in female portraits, fashion art, model portfolios and fine art nudes. He has become our resident pro model photographer, providing an amazing library of images for our artists to work with when creating their masterpieces.





Quil
LIVING





Quill and Camera

THE PHOTO ARTISTIC LIFE

Enjoy interviews with the featured artists of AWAKE at:
<https://www.quillandcamera.com/>

**And Be Sure to Follow us and See
Your Favorite Artists on Instagram!**

@photoshopartistry



Background Image Credit:
Kathleen Greenwood (USA)

LIVING THE PHOTO ARTISTIC LIFE

PUSHING PHOTOGRAPHY FURTHER



INTERESTED IN CREATING PHOTO ART OF YOUR OWN?

GET STARTED HERE:

[HTTP://PROPHOTOSHOPARTISTRY.COM](http://prophotoshopartistry.com)

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