

## Collaborations at the Museum of the Living Artist

Collaborations went beyond the core exhibitions at SDAI's Museum of the Living Artist, bringing together traditional with digital art, a variety of art programs as well as a fugue of visual interpretations of the Institute's leaders. Tim Field, CEO of the San Diego Art Institute, presides over the most prominent San Diego art organization working with visual artists in all media exhibitions. SDAI exhibits more than thirty juried shows in its two exhibit spaces, the Museum of the Living Artists (Balboa Park) and the San Diego Art Department (North Park). Field was inspired to make a visual comment on the variety of collaborations within SDAI that reached inside and out the organization. He organized an exhibit that showcased the San Diego Art Department (the SDAI affiliate in the North Park community that provided an important educational venue), the Digital Art Guild (partner with SDAI on the Institute's First International Digital Fine Art Exhibition, 2006) and three artists who began working together as part of a Movers and Shakers art group. Some of the exhibition was a retrospective, while other parts were newly created for this exhibit to showcase artistic collaboration. The exhibit ran from November 13 - 22, 2009. Claire Slattery looks east the day before the show opens. This area looks to work exhibited by the San Diego Art Department and the three collaborative artists, Ellen Dieter, Shahla Dorafshan and Richard Messenger.

An unknown visitor in the southwest corner of the gallery, looking at the image by Renata Spiazzi, Search for the Night Flower. Digital Collaboration: A Title in Common, but a Different Vision of the Night Flower

Renata Spiazzi creates wildly colorful and dynamic fractals, often printing them on canvas and stretching them as a gallery wrapped painting would appear. In this composition, Spiazzi invites the viewer to the pond in the darkness of the night to search for the night flower. She usually works with fractals to discover compositions at times completely non-objective and at times only barely abstract. In this case we recognize the darkness, the reflections and the mention of growth enough to push the viewer into the search -- Search for the Night Flower.

Joe Nalven generally works from his own photographic sourced images and will frequently mount mylar prints on metal that have been brushed and patina'd. In this composition, Nalven has taken two infrared images and pushed them in different directions -- in color and along the continuum from representation to abstraction; the other is an infrared photograph of a hand that was converted to black and white. He calls this God Creates the Nightflower as a re-imagining of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco called God Creates Man. Nalven invites the viewer to rethink the original Biblical narrative as well as the medium that would optimize a contemporary feel.

The Organizations - Digital Art Guild and San Diego Art Institute

The Digital Art Guild is a program member of the San Diego Art Institute and co-sponsored the First International Digital Art Exhibition. The Guild also honored digital artists with a prize during SDAI's 50th International Art Exhibition.

Three Artists Paint Three Administrators

Ellen Dieter, Shahla Dorafshan and Richard Messenger, working under the umbrella of the Movers and Shakers association, arranged to paint three SDAI staff members: Tim Field, CEO, Kerstin Robers, Director of Administration and Andrea Chamberlin, Director of the Education Program for the San Diego Art Department. What began as a single grouping of images soon became a fascination and blossoming of numerous portrait sets.

All of their paintings in this series were painted collectively.

Portrait I - The Threesome Collaborate

Ellen Dieter describes this collaboration at her blogspot: "Working in collaboration with Richard Messenger and Shahla Dorafshan puts a smile on my face! Our collaboration was born out of an idea for the San Diego Visual Arts Network's project MOVERS AND SHAKERS. We, a group of artists, ERS, (Ellen, Richard, Shahla) were to create a group portrait. We painted together, all of us on the same surface, big pieces of brown paper (generally 4' x 6') at the same time! An amazing experience!" Ellen Dieter, Shahla Dorafshan and Richard Messenger collectively paint Kerstin Robers, Tim Field and Andrea Chamberlin

Portrait III

Portrait of Tim Field, CEO SDAI (Upper)

Portrait of Andrea Chamberlin (Middle)

Portrait of Kerstin Robers (Lower)

In reflecting on this collaboration, Richard Messenger observed, "It seemed like an unrehearsed symphony at times. Spontaneous. Free. We didn't need many words. We trusted each other and respected each others moves and yet at the same time might paint over what someone had just painted. We all moved easily around one another. It might seem corny but we worked as one, yet remained very individual. We all seemed to agree when we were done or not done. The more I think about this unusual process and the outcome, the more I believe it was a gift to paint with these two wonderful artists that it seems unlikely for this combination to happen again. I can only conclude it was inspired."

Portrait V - A, B, C

Ellen Dieter, Shahla Dorfashan and Richard Messenger collectively painted the portraits of Kerstin Robers, Tim Field and Andrea Chamberlin

Dorfashan summed up her experience with this threesome painting: "To collaborate in this way, you need to think out of the box&minus;to relax your own vision and style. In order to have a painting by three to be as if we were one, by working in one painting together, I needed to avoid thinking that I was always right and yield to the other artist painting over my painting."

Shahla Dorafshan's artwork can be viewed at her website - [Shahla's Gallery](#).