



Intrusion Meets Infusion

Artist Dot Krause powerfully depicts the impact of man on nature by combining non-traditional materials and techniques.

WHEN DOROTHY SIMPSON KRAUSE stopped painting portraits as a teenager and grew interested in abstract expressionism, her mother thought her daughter's art career was headed downhill. In fact, the opposite was true.

Today, not only is Krause considered a pioneer in the field of digital art but she has achieved the kind of success many artists only dream about. A painter, collage artist, and printmaker who incorporates digital mixed media into her art, Krause regularly exhibits her work in museums and galleries. This March she will have her fourth solo show at the Judi Rotenberg Gallery on Boston's Newbury Street. Three years ago, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, one of several museums that include her work in their permanent collections, acquired 13 of her digital monoprints.

She has been an artist-in-residence at the American Academy in Rome and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC. She is a professor emerita at the Massachusetts College of Art, where, in 1985, she set up one of the first computer art centers in the country, and in 2000 she received the Kodak Innovator Award.

BY SHERYL SEYFERT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACK FOLEY

It's been a heady journey for an only child who entertained herself by drawing and making paper dolls, but one that Krause, 66, says is about the work, not the success. "Art for me is a way of figuring things out," she explains. "I'd like to say it's about sharing my work, but it's not. It's so I can make sense out of things. It's my way of understanding what's important and then commenting on it."

Krause's most innovative technique and the one that has awarded her the most acclaim involves combining traditional and nontraditional materials (such as plaster



and tar) with digital media to create collages on aluminum, handmade papers, plexiglass, and spunbonded polyester. For her current exhibit at the Rotenberg Gallery she has used transparent and reflective materials including polycar-



bonate, metallic pigments, and silver leaf in an attempt to capture the feel of light and shadow.

The exhibit, called "Viewpoint," is the name of Krause's Marshfield Hills studio and home. She chose the title for her show, she says, because it refers not only to the views she holds about her world but the vista outside her windows. It's also "...a lament for a vanishing landscape...for the intrusion of man in nature," she writes in her artist's statement for the exhibit.

The ideas for her work often develop in her journals or "artist's books," a burgeoning art form created with materials not usually associated with books, such as fabric, wood, leather, metal, and found objects. "The books are the seed corn for my larger pieces," Krause says. "I work out a lot of ideas in them. They're more controversial than my other work, and are strictly for me. I don't sell them; they're too personal."

For her early journals she would buy blank books and write in them while she was traveling, adding small sketches in the margins. "Eventually, I stopped writing," she says. "It's hard and slow for me, while images are fun and fast." Transforming some of the older journals into book art, she obliterated her writing. "I had things in there like where we went to dinner." She laughs. "You know,

really important stuff." Instead, she added photographs, mementos, and scanned images.

One of her early artist's books was "Vietnam Journal." During her visit to the country in 1997, with her husband Richard and her daughter and son-in-law, she decided to try and capture the essence of Vietnam and its people. "To pay homage to their spirit of survival," she says. She included flags, diagrams, coins, cigarette papers, pins, paper prayers, rubbings, even a strip of snakeskin from a boa constrictor.

When she returned home she selected the photographs that most expressed her experience. "I scanned the double pages of my journal into my computer," Krause says. Using the programs Photoshop and Painter, she combined them with the photographs and then printed the images on 22" x 30" sheets of handmade paper from Vietnam,



Packard B9180), and a Microteck 9800XL scanner, all of which are located in what Krause calls the "command center" of her studio, a loft at the peak of her octagonal house. Accessed by a spiral staircase, the command center overlooks the first floor living area where seven sliding glass doors provide a 180-degree panorama of the historic North River, the South River, the Massachusetts Bay, and the ocean beyond. "I get to watch the sunrise and the sun-

Thailand, Nepal, and India. It was this series of 13 images that the Museum of Fine Arts acquired.

Krause began experimenting with computers back in the mid-1970s, using one of the first Apples and a dot-matrix printer. She also began writing her own programs in order to do different kinds of transfer prints before Photoshop was available. Today she has three Macs, two desktop printers (a Tektronix Phaser 780 and a 13" Hewlett-





set," Krause says.

Two stories below, in the basement, is her 2,000 square-foot working studio and storage space. "It's where the fun is," Krause says. The room is filled with paints, sheet metal, wood, wax, leather, inks, hammers, and clamps. There's also a high-quality, 44" wide-format Epson 9600 printer, a CODA laminator which Krause uses as a monoprint press, and a 17" Macbook Pro PC which is used for lenticular prints (a process where two or more images are interlaced and then viewed separately from different angles; 3D and motion capturing can also be achieved).

Along one wall of the studio is a stack of large plastic boxes filled with the odds-and-ends Krause has collected at flea markets and yard sales and will use, she says, "when inspiration strikes." Krause admits that while her computer is her most important tool, collage is the process she loves the best. "I really enjoy scavenging for treasures. I particularly like things with age and an abraded quality to them."

Two traits that have contributed to Krause's success as an artist are she's easily bored and she's not afraid to make mistakes. "I'm always wondering what I can do next," Krause says. "I make things up as I go along. A lot of art is process and experimentation." If a piece doesn't work out, she tries something else. "You only move

forward when you take risks," she says. "I have my failures. I just throw them away or put them in a drawer."

Mary Taylor, Krause's assistant of 10 years, chimes in, "We call that drawer 'possibilities that didn't work', at least not yet." The truth is, Taylor adds, "Dot is really good at taking



failure and turning it around."

Taylor, an artist in her own right, takes care of the administrative aspects of Krause's business, assists with the research and development of new materials, and handles the shipping and display of Krause's art. "Three mornings a week," Krause says, "we go to the gym and discuss new projects while we're on the treadmill. If Mary ever leaves me," she adds, only half-jokingly, "I'll have to close up shop and move into a nursing home. She's invaluable to me. She doubles my capacity to be productive. She does all the things I don't want to."

The truth is, Krause can't imagine herself not creating art. "It's the reason I get up in the morning," she says. "It's my way to explore. It's how I take every experience I've ever had and reformat it." She pauses. "I get lost when I'm creating. I totally lose track of time." She looks around her studio and then says, "I hope to do this forever." SSI

For additional information about Krause's artwork, visit www.dotkrause.com. Taylor's artwork may be seen on www.taylorarttechs.com.