

Float on to Surrealism

David Gran

The concept of the Student Creative began as an idea by art teacher Matt Cauthron of Cathedral City High School's Digital Arts Technology Academy in Palm Springs, California. His goal was to create a forum for students to engage in creative challenges and present their successes to an authentic audience of their peers online.

Matt's idea quickly found collaborators. Craig Roland's Art Education 2.0 (arted20.ning.com) has become a magnet for art teachers who are enthusiastic about exchanging ideas and pushing their classrooms out into the digital world. In fact, as I got to know Matt through this site, we both realized that we were doing similar projects with our photography and digital classes on opposite sides of the world.

Through many conversations, we developed the idea of turning his Student Creative into a series of collaborative challenges that we would extend to other photography classrooms around the globe. The first two of these challenges were based on projects that we were working on with our students.

Paint the World with Light

The first collaborative, Paint the World with Light, challenged students to use light to reveal something about their communities. Students literally painted with light, using a process called light painting. Some of the most common tools of the trade in light painting are flashlights, LED lights, and glow sticks, but any light-emitting device will do. These tools become

brushes when used in long-exposure photography, and students find dark areas to create beautiful bright paintings of light in mid-air.

FLOAT!

Our second challenge was inspired by portrait photographer Philippe Halsman's *Jumpology* series. Halsman believed that you can capture a person in their truest essence when they jump—for at that moment we drop the masks that we wear every day. FLOAT! challenged students to use Halsman's strategy to capture a moment of magical realism and gravity defying impossibility.

In the course of building this forum, we both knew that we also wanted to work with Mike Skocko from Valhalla High School in San Diego, California, who was doing amazing things on his blog, The Mac Lab (maclab.guhsd.net/blog).

Surrealistic Me

Our latest project was Mike's idea. Surrealistic Me offers students a simple, yet elegant challenge: to create a surreal self-portrait. However, there is a deeper challenge here, as Surrealism aims to use the language of dreams to reveal more about ourselves.

As in our previous projects, the subject is intentionally broad—we encourage teachers to manipulate this foundational idea in any way that best fits their curricular needs or will elicit the most creative response from their students. That being said, we have also provided the framework of a lesson on our project website, in which





we suggest that students use Nicholas Roukes' Operational Techniques for Transformation in connection with images that they gather from their communities and cultures, as well as their own memories and dreams. These techniques provide various avenues for transforming and manipulating images to create new meanings.

With our third challenge, we aim to broaden the scope of our challenge. Surrealistic Me invites students to submit any appropriate media. For more information on Surrealistic Me, visit our website at carrotrevolution.com/surrealisticme.

We invite you and your students to take this surreal challenge with us. As with our earlier projects, Surrealistic Me will be published in book form and will be available online. Hurry, though, the deadline for this project is April 15, 2012.

All of the Student Creative's previous publications are available for

purchase at www.blurb.com/user/StudentC. All proceeds from our sales go directly towards the Jacaranda Foundation, an organization that benefits the Jacaranda School for AIDS orphans in Malawi. More information on the Jacaranda Foundation can be found at www.jacarandafoundation.org.

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students create multiple solutions to specific visual arts problems that demonstrate competence in producing effective relationships between structural choices and artistic functions.

WEB LINK

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