
An Artist Rides The Digital Edge

BY ILENE ROIZMAN

Post-millennial architects have tools at their fingertips never even imagined by those in the trade 100 years ago. Literally at the push of a few buttons clients can see animated three-dimensional renderings of proposed projects. Or insert lifelike digital drawings into photographs of existing landscapes, as a sort of sneak preview of what the buildings would look like once all the disruptive construction was over.

The architect Richard Meier's project at 173 and 176 Perry Street in the West Village, all crystalline and metallic, for instance, looks somewhat out of place among smaller, older, brick and mortar type houses — the towers look brand-spanking new, unoccupied, ready to be transformed into viable living spaces, while the surrounding buildings look worn and tired. The picture suggests the emergence of a new profile for the Manhattan skyline.

The digital artist Paul Domzal created the enhanced images and put four views of the altered landscape on heavy-stock, 6-by-6-inch post-cards. He said that the apartments are selling like crazy, "at \$2 million a pop."

He also created a sort of virtual reality tour of Guild Hall's recent Artist Members Exhibit, which anyone with an Internet connection can see at www.edge-media.com/guild_hall. It blends dozens of digital photographs taken with a fish-eye lens into a simulated three-dimensional

depiction of all the artwork in the gallery space. It's hardly like being there, but it's an innovative way to archive the show.

Setting Up Shop

Mr. Domzal has recently set up his business, Edge Media, at 197 Madison Street in Sag Harbor. The huge windows facing Madison and Jermain Avenue and the white, open space make the large first-floor room ideal for a gallery.

Right now, though, it's not quite all set up just yet. It's been only three months, Mr. Domzal said; "it's still a work in progress."

He intends to provide three services, primarily for artists, real estate agents, and architects. He's been doing "renderings and animation for architects" since March 1993, and, aside from Mr. Meier and Guild Hall, he's worked with I.M. Pei, Charles Gwathmey, Harry Fischman, and Maziar Behrooz, among others.

Artists' Exposure

The work he does continually crosses the line between ultra-high-resolution prints and point-and-click images on a computer screen. Artists can have their paintings photographed and reproduced on heavy museum-quality paper for about \$200 apiece, give or take, depending on the set-up time, the type of paper, and the image itself.

"If I absolutely love your images

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THIS IS ONE OF SEVERAL panoramic views of the Artist Members Exhibit at Guild Hall. An interactive version of the entire show can be found online. *Edge Media Images*



THIS DIGITAL RENDERING shows how two apartment buildings will fit in with the existing streetscape.

Edge

Continued From III-1 and I think they would sell," instead of charging fees up front, Mr. Domzal said, "I'll partner with you" — for half the price of prints sold. It's a good option for artists just getting started.

Built into the cost is exposure on a Web site that not only shows the artists' works but offers limited edition prints for sale. Then there's the possible exposure to thousands of passing motorists (and summer pedestrians) at the busy intersection when Mr. Domzal sets up a "real gallery" along with the work studio.

Real estate photography goes in another direction: "enhanced Inter-

net listings" for residential properties. In addition to the traditional snapshots, an online listing can have 360-degree exterior and interior views with the drag of a mouse. Click on a door and you're in the next room. Zoom in, zoom out, step out to the backyard, check out the tiles on the bathroom ceiling, all without actually being there.

For \$500, Mr. Domzal will insert four "panoramas" and an e-mail attachment into an individual real estate listing. Of course, "if someone has a \$10 million house, it needs more bells and whistles" and thus more images, which adds to the cost.

The e-mail attachment allows people to send the panoramic images to friends or colleagues or family members, and it has the added convenience of opening without having to access any software in the recipient's hard drive. In other words, no error messages telling you that your computer is unable to open the attachment.

Animated Architecture

Architects have the cutting edge option of having their renderings animated, allowing a two-dimensional blueprint to become a virtual three-dimensional image that can be walked around and seen from every angle.

Or, they can have blow-up drawings printed on poster-sized paper, as Harry Fischman did for a reconstructed rendering of Pierre Chareau's design of Robert Motherwell's East Hampton house. For inclusion in a book to be called "Weekend Utopia" with commentary by Alastair Gordon about the Hamptons in the '40s and '50s, Mr. Fischman studied photos and written histories to get a picture of the house in Georgia as it existed in its heyday.

Chareau was a pioneer at the time, using inexpensive industrial materials in his designs. Motherwell did



ROY VOLKMANN's photo "Brother (Monte/Brown Dance Company)" is a 4-by-4-foot archival inkjet print.

some of his best known work there, and the house was a hip hangout for folks like Samuel Beckett and Jackie Kennedy. Unkempt and dilapidated, it was demolished in the late 1980s.

This nostalgic project, said Mr. Domzal, helps to "keep the flame alive."

Edge Media is essentially a one-man operation. After a career as a management consultant for a high-powered international firm, Mr. Domzal said, "I quit my job and started to live the real life instead of the dress rehearsal."

Motivated by personal interest to enter the field of digital technology, he at first thought virtual reality was the way to go. But the equipment was so expensive, "you had to be Disney or Time Warner, otherwise it was just a mom and pop hobby."

On the other hand, the cost of animated architectural renderings became more accessible and the technology became powerful enough to create lifelike images — and Mr. Domzal already knew many architects. So that's when Edge Media got off the ground. The cost of state-of-the-art equipment, with annual software and periodic hardware upgrades, "can reach six figures" a year, he said.

The other cost in running this business is time. "It's mind-boggling," said Mr. Domzal, a self-described perfectionist, of the exacting attention to detail necessary to produce quality products — products that help artists sell their paintings, real estate agents rent or sell their listed properties, and architects pitch their latest ideas to anyone anywhere in the world.

The Web address is www.edge-media.com.