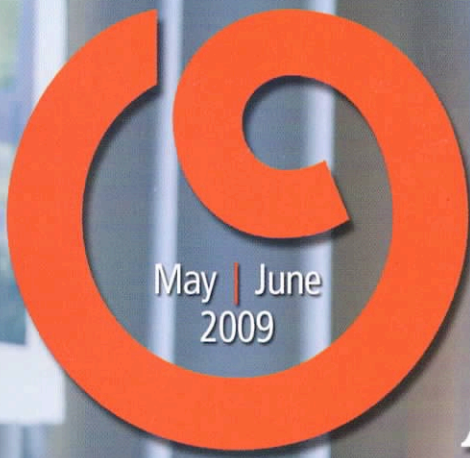


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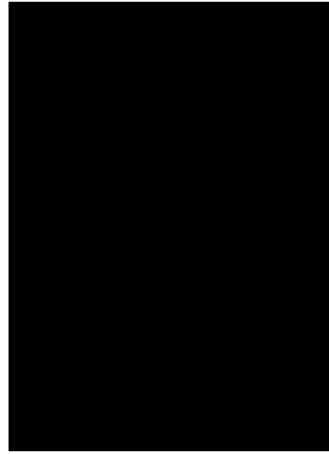
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Sky Lake Studios: Coming Home

by Kate Ashby



Upon entering Sky Lake Studios a large work station sits in the center of the room. Framed photos of panoramic landscapes, a simulated Tinker Bell and a photo-composite Frankenstein hang on the white walls. Above a round conference table, a crystal ball chandelier changes color from pink to blue to orange to green.

In the far corner of the room, a white grand piano glistens in the sun from the floor-to-ceiling windows that surround the studio. To the left, a wood shelf serves as an interesting bar, and to the right a giant portrait of Angelina Jolie, accentuating her pale, plump lips, makes a huge impact.

On a wall just above a large inkjet printer sit three framed diplomas: Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Rhode Island School of Design, Master of Science in Visual Studies from MIT and Doctor of Chiropractic degree from Cleveland Chiropractic College.

All belong to Shelley Lake, the owner of Sky Lake Studios, an art reproduction studio on the corner of Morse Boulevard



and New England Avenue in Winter Park.

“Mom and I picked this location because of the historic energy that is peculiar to this intersection,” she said while looking out the large windows toward the cobblestone streets.

Ultimately, it was family that drew her back, she admitted, after living in Los Angeles for about 20 years and New England for 17 years.

“Now that I am here, I am committed to family first,” she added. However, when she’s not keeping tabs on her busy mother, Harriett, Lake supports local artists. She believes the connection between all three of her degrees led her into the art of art reproduction, and she has brought this complex skill to Orlando.

The design of her workspace is an edgy and inviting space within the more

traditional downtown Winter Park. Starkly beautiful photos in simple frames, instead of watercolors or stained-glass. An open, airy layout, instead of rows of glass shelves stacked with merchandise for sale. Fun and unexpected elements such as the disco-style chandelier, instead of Tiffany-inspired lamps.

Art reproduction is typically not a spectator sport, but Lake has made her studio and workspace open to the public. Some visitors, often other artists, stroll through her studios watching her work, while others inquire about the works of art for sale on her walls.

"Artists are often alienated because people see them as crazy bohemians," she explained. "I've reversed that phenomenon by helping empower artists and being a service provider for them — primarily through helping them realize their vision, and I mean that literally."

Lake reproduces original art from almost any medium, including watercolors, oil paintings and digital images. She said the tedious process involves photographing the original art on a super high-

resolution camera, painstakingly adjusting the photo in a program such as Adobe Photoshop, and printing the image on a large inkjet printer. And proofing, proofing and proofing throughout the process. She does not rush anything. Another special aspect is that she reproduces the art on the same medium as the original, such as canvas.

She revealed she may work a whole week on a challenging project. For example, on her work station sat two oil paintings, one original and one reprint. She pointed to a certain color red in the print she was struggling to match.

"I do as good a match as I can get and then I have to move on to the next," she shrugged.

However, she said, other projects may easily fall right into place. Watercolors and pastels are generally the easiest because their ink sets tend to match the ink set of the printer. She walked over to a white-lacquer dresser drawer and pulled out a lion painting done by a South African artist. She said she got the colors to almost match up right out of her camera.

Other clients bring in digital images to be enlarged. Hanging out of the printer was a 54-by-36 inch print of a wintery wonderland reproduced from an image on an 8 megapixel consumer camera, Lake explained.

Although she typically doesn't do any type of framing for clients, Lake does custom sizing, which sets her business apart from most that only offer standard sizing.

"I'm used to being a pioneer in uncharted territory anyway and my work is often a reflection of that," she said.

For example, a digitized portrait of Tinker Bell against a pale pink background hangs in Sky Lake Studios and represents Lake's work on the forefront of technology. According to Lake, the image was created in 1984 as part of her job simulating Disney characters in Hollywood.

Lake studied computer science at MIT. She said the media room boasted a floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall monitor, where voice recognition, eye tracking and a program called "put that there" were tested. She waved her arms as if holding a wand



as she explained “put that there” used such a device to move elements around the monitor.

“There were things they were doing that haven’t even been implemented yet,” she reminisced. “It’s still futuristic 35 years out.”

After three years at MIT, Lake headed to Hollywood in the early ‘80s to work in computer graphics. From 1982 to 1987, she worked for Digital Productions, a pioneer production company, making cinema and advertisements using a \$12 million super computer that required a 747 engine for cooling.

However, Lake explained the industry collapsed in 1987 due to an economic crisis similar to now, which led her into the healing arts. She said she had always been interested in anatomy and physiology.

“I always thought of the tactile arts as an extension of art because I’m still working with my hands,” she stressed.

Unfortunately, amid her chiropractic studies Lake was diagnosed with breast cancer. She said the experience led her to the wilderness, where she found comfort, peace and rejuvenation.

“I’m not cavalier about a year anymore,” she said. “It [cancer] put a dent in that immortal sensibility I used to have.”

At first, she was intimidated by taking a camera into nature because she worried the camera wouldn’t capture the same image she was seeing, then she thought, “what the heck.” She took a yearlong backpacking class to learn how to carry equipment and how to survive in the wilderness, such as pitching a tent and filtering water. She said her equipment weighed nearly 40 pounds, including a 4-by-5 camera she called the rig, while heaving it out of a storage closet in the back of her studio.



Large panoramic photos from Monument Valley, a region of the Colorado Plateau in southern Utah and northern Arizona, hang around the studio. It is her favorite place to shoot.

For instance, she described a panoramic photo she took of a plateau formation called The Wave in Coyote Buttes, Ariz. She shot the photo around noon to minimize shadows, in midsummer with 110-degree weather.

“It’s like a three-hour daunting hike in very difficult terrain,” she said of her journey to the location. “It was very strenuous.”

These days, Lake said travel has taken a backseat to family, but added she stays busy with hundreds of captures she has yet to process. She said her one to 2 gigabyte images used to collapse in older versions of Photoshop, but she is now able to edit using Adobe Photoshop CS4.

“I could spend weeks and months revisiting stuff from the past, instead of capturing new stuff,” she added.

Some of her current projects include experiments with black and white as well as a project with emoticons. Some of

Harriett Lake’s Burberry scarves and Louis Vuitton handbags were strewn across a work table as Lake explained she is also experimenting with plaid.

Like her mother, Lake is also involved with supporting the arts and nonprofits in the community. While stapling a canvas to its wood frame, she revealed it was a panoramic photo of Time Square in New York. She donated the art to be auctioned off at the 2009 Orlando Heart Ball, benefiting the American Heart Association.

As the arts community continues to grow in Winter Park and Orlando, through art establishments such as the Winter Park Sidewalk Art Festival and The Charles Hosmer Morse Museum, Lake said she sees the art infusion happening. She’s excited to share her work and expertise in a more established arts community compared to when she lived in Orlando before.

“Bringing my art back here,” Lake reflected, “maybe this is the right time and right place.”

Sky Lake Studios

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