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Artist and USM professor Raphael DiLuzio juices the creative process from the studio to the world.

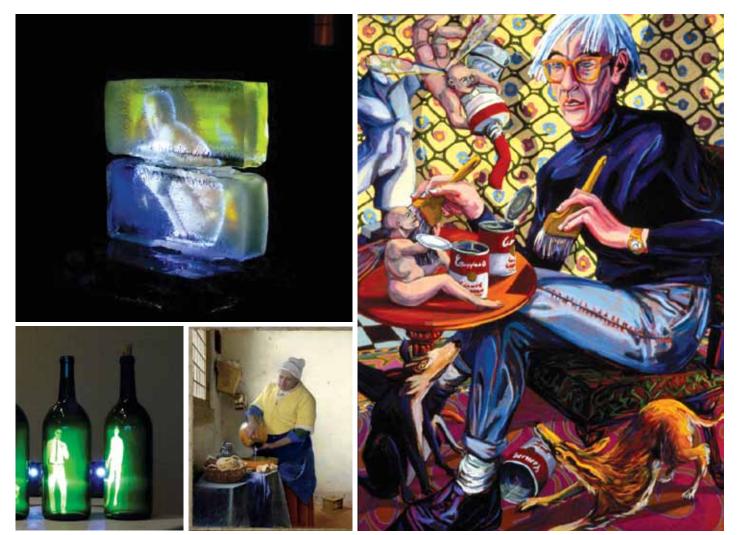
INTERVIEW BY CLAIRE Z. CRAMER

or years, Raphael DiLuzio was a man of two worlds. By day, he was a professor of Art and New Media at the University of Maine at Orono. By night, commuting back to his home in Portland, he enjoyed shocking his audiences with his video installation imagery. His 2007 show at the former Jameson Gallery included light projections of himself crouched and shivering inside a huge block of ice on Commercial Street. (Perfect for startling tourists walking by on a First Friday night.) Then came the night in 2007 of his daring "Light House," where he projected his video images onto the Cousins Island power station, accompanied by an original musical score broadcast live on WCLZ-FM.

Fate, not art, turned 2008 upside down. His life was shattered when a 16-wheel truck smashed into the rear end of his Honda on I-95. His slow recovery from the collision and severe concussion took nearly two years. He had to restore his ability to speak

The three-dimensional interactive "Voices of Design: 25 Years of Architalx" exhibit at Portland Museum of Art in 2013 featured DiLuzio's work.

PERSPECTIVE



DiLuzio works in many media, including, clockwise from far right: The painting My Dinner With Andy; a still from the video Half Empty; and the light projections Message in the Bottle and You Are My Sunshine.

from scratch.

"I was told I'd never speak again, would never recover my 'higher words' again," he says. "Doctors make everything the lowest common denominator" to avoid disappointments-"or malpractice lawsuits."

"My thoughts came back, but everything was disorganized. Nothing was where it belonged. I spent months in my brain, my 'memory palace,' rearranging the furniture."

Somehow, though, in the process of healing his brain, DiLuzio found creative perspectives he hadn't considered before. Everything is new.

Your development as an artist began very traditionally with a BFA from the University of California at Long Beach (1987) and MFA (University of Pennsylvania, 1991).

I trained as a painter. I was doing graduate work at Cornell when I met Neil Welliver, Maine's great landscape painter. He knew my work and convinced me to come to Penn, where he ran the program, which I did. Some people say he was gruff or crusty. To me, he had the most generous heart. He was my mentor, and it's because of Neil I ended up in Maine. Even as I went off with all the digital things, my connection to the landscape's always been there.

Since recovering from your injury, you've turned up as a tenured professor at USM, not UMO.

About eight years ago, people at Stanford developed something they call 'entrepreneurial based research' as a way to bring creativity and science together. I was at Orono, and when I started talking with [Former UMaine Systems Chancellor] Richard Patenaude and [Provost] Joe Wood about this, they were interested.

Then, the accident, the injury. Fast-forward five years. I wrote a white paper about 'design science' called CI2 [Creative Intelligence, Innovation, Collaboration]. Patenaude liked it. Selma Botman [USM president at the time] said, 'Let's build a CI2 lab here.' The idea was to be creative and cross-disciplinary. This is what I've been doing for the past three years.

At Orono they said, 'Hey, you're leaving?' And I had to tell them that, yes, Orono's the scientific flagship in the system, but Portland is the hub of Maine, and this should be in Portland. Our university system is crazy to separate so many campuses. We don't have enough students.

At USM, I wrote a CI2 grant proposal for the National Science Foundation about the collaboration between fine art, science, and technology. I've written many, many art grant proposals, but I'd never written a science grant. I figured I didn't have a chance. Let's face it, artists don't have to produce facts and evidence to support their work the way scientists do. But it was accepted.

You've somehow created a department within the art department at a time when USM is budgetcutting like crazy.

My proposal was for creative-process training courses for STEM professors to incorporate into *their* programs. It's not art; it's not about making people into artists. We held a six-day workshop with the Maine Center for Creativity up in Rockport. People from L.L. Bean, WEX, Idexx, and Unum attended. Sprague Energy now wants to talk about this training program.

Making art is not just about making fine art. The creative process doesn't belong just to artists. It's important to science.

It's all based on the seven steps of creative thinking. This stuff goes back to Plato.

What goes on in the university's Cl2 lab?

Students come to explore something they're interested in. There are no classes. All I ask is that they work collaboratively and collectively. They can receive credit, and some can be paid a stipend, thanks to the NSF grant. These are undergraduates, and there are some *smart* kids.

Sometimes professors come in from other departments with a group of students on a project.

I've got students who are developing apps for real money. I have the most creative students around. We have a group now who are looking at the technology of the prosthetic foot, for amputees. It costs about \$40,000 to replace a human foot. My students are working on building one for under \$10,000.

There are towers out in the desert collecting energy; they're called solar intake transfer centers. Students here are working on the math to create a home model using a Dyson vacuum cleaner engine.

There's a group developing a program they call PlowMaine to make snow plowing routes more efficient. Don't laugh. One-800-Got-Junk tried to buy them.

A student cinematographer/videographer is working for a marketing firm here in town. Another student is developing a game; he has a job waiting when he graduates.

What's your role?

I'm the curator. I want the students to create something, start companies in Maine, succeed in Maine.

I get so tired of hearing, 'Oh, it's Maine. (Continued on page 80)

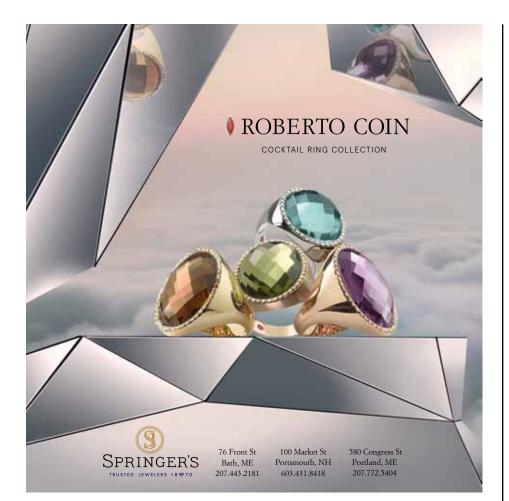


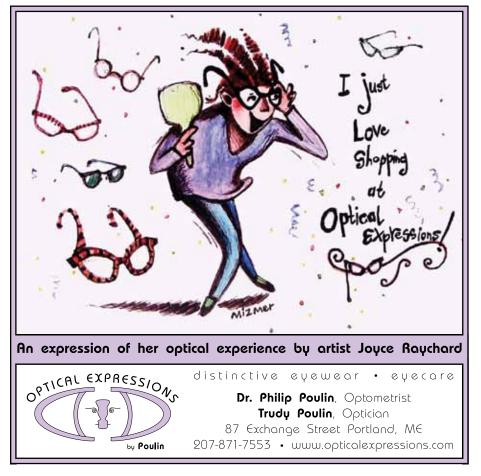
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PERSPECTIVE

Live Wire (continued from page 49)

It's not Stanford. It's not Harvard.' There arreally brilliant students at USM. I find students with more life responsibilities and skills in the Portland area; they're really focused. Not hanging around the frat house drinking beer.

All the tech aside, you still teach drawing.

I've never stopped being an art teacher. I can teach drawing better than I draw. My 'mark' is just not as controlled as it was. I worked hard to get it back after the accident.

What's going on in the studio these days in terms of your own art?

I'm taking a step back. I was working on a series of digital remakes of old masters. You know Vermeer's milkmaid? Now I'm the milkmaid, same lighting, modern setting, pouring the milk over and over. I'm the Mona Lisa.

Maine's been really good for me. I still think it's one of the best places for artists. Even when I do the crazy video stuff.

But I wanted the connection again. No matter what you do digitally, it's indirect. The direct kinesthetic is not there.

So I'm starting a series for my gallery, Elizabeth Moss in Falmouth. I'm going out in *plein air* with my paints to make a series of landscape paintings. My palette was influenced by *plein air* painters in California, where I'm from. It's my palette, not Neil Welliver's.

To me, landscape painting is interesting. No matter how real you make an image, it's abstract. It all comes down to how you control or release the mark on the paper. We'll see if I'm any good at this point.

Since your accident, you've been incredibly productive. You've changed schools, created a new interdisciplinary program. You've had to learn to think, talk, draw, and now paint again.

I got married two years ago, to the most wonderful woman.

And as a challenge to myself, I've started doing stand-up comedy. I started at Slainte, and I've done open mic at the Dogfish. I'm getting ready for another open mic there soon. As a teacher, I have access to a lot of very funny material.

I can predict weather now. I'm affected by barometric pressure-terrible headaches when it drops as a storm approaches.

I lost some superpowers and got some new ones.

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