

Rastin Mehr: Case Study
IDEAworks Award Winner 2001
By Dawn Desrochers

What do you get when you cross a Science Major with Visual Arts electives? You get Rastin Mehr, magician of web design.

Rastin appreciates the beautiful architecture of Foodteller, the restaurant where we enjoy our lattes, safe from the fresh foot of snow in the streets outside. Prince George is not Rastin's natural environment, and he is delighted to discover this "Vancouverish" atmosphere in a restaurant here in town. He appreciates the lines and the rows of televisions set into the wall like no one else who I have introduced to my favorite hang out. "I have been looking for a place like this," he sighs, looking around with satisfaction.

Rastin is a brilliant designer who has combined his love of graphic design and photography with his education in the sciences to create for himself the job of his dreams. He looks the part of a designer, too, with his dark hair just long enough that he could probably put it in a ponytail, if that were his style, but it isn't.

When this soft-spoken young man began his post-secondary education, he started out studying sciences. As his electives, he chose courses in the areas of visual arts, since they drew his interest.

He worked for a while in computer sales. This era of his life was helpful in a few ways. First, the work helped increase his knowledge of computers and audiovisual technology. Second, he learned how to take care of customers,

study competition, break the ice and convince a customer of what is good for him or her.

He also spent time managing a restaurant, and this is when he developed his gift for photography, especially food photography.

This was during the first big days of the Internet, and Rastin found himself pulled towards the Web along with many others. After two years of study, Rastin realized he didn't want to be a dentist. He wanted to be a designer, so he looked for a university that would accept his science and arts courses as transferable to a Computer Science degree.

Fortunately for Prince George, that university was UNBC. Rastin now has a select group of clients. He spends approximately twenty hours per week working on the sites he designs for these clients. He combines his knowledge of design with his programming skills to create Flash sites that are ingenious. As far as money goes, he says with a smile, "I earn enough to live a comparatively good lifestyle as a student. I can afford to buy the high end equipment that I need and to look good to clients."

He not only understands technology, but he understands business. "My father was a businessman. I grew up in his office. I learned about networking there."

"Do you think technology businesses can prosper in the north?" I ask.

"Technology is not profitable for people who don't know technology and try to get into it thinking they will get rich overnight. Newcomers to technology

made the market look bad, because they didn't know what they were doing, so they failed."

The atmosphere of the restaurant inspires this lover of design to talk about the history of graphic design, so the interview turns into a brief history lesson for me.

"You know, I met the architect of this place," he said. "The same architect who designed UNBC. He thought I was being sarcastic when I said I had been dreaming to meet him someday."

I laugh, "Well, it does sound a bit cheesy."

He smiles. "It is true though. And I never would have met him if I had not displayed my work in [IDEAworks](#). I am glad I did it."

"So you not only won a prize, but also had a dream realized?"

I guess you could say it was a good day for Rastin Mehr.

Before we brave the sudden Prince George winter once again, Rastin discusses with the bartender another love that becomes obvious when viewing his creations. That is the joy of making a martini, shaking it until the ice explodes.

Just the Facts

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