

mentor's introduction

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Dena Eber's work is on the forefront of current research in art education. Her focus on the creative process as it relates to the making of a virtual environment work of art is an attempt on her part to explore the artistic potential of a technological medium all too often perceived primarily in terms of its novelty.

Dena is an artist, a mathematician, and a sensitive observer of the impact of works of art on her life and on the lives of others. She has an undergraduate degree in mathematics, a *Master of Science degree in Computer Science*, a master of Fine Arts degree in Studio Art (Photography), and is currently completing the requirements for a Ph.D. in Art. She writes of her interest in the visual arts, "Art was always there and was always a part of my everyday life." While working on her undergraduate degree in mathematics, Dena became aware of the similarities between math and art. The math professors, according to Dena, were like "artists in their own right. Watching them write elegant proofs was like watching forces in nature create beauty from pure elements." These intense mathematical expressions reminded her of "a work of performance art." Her artistic interests were nurtured, and she discovered computers and digital imagery.

Since that time, Dena has sought to learn all she can about the use of the computer as an artistic medium. She has experienced the wonder of virtual environment works of art and has created similar works of her own. Dena speaks the language of the computer age, but, most importantly, she has the vision of an artist. She believes that virtual environment works of art have the unique potential to facilitate the aesthetic experience for the viewer in a way that is unlike that of any other medium. The artist is acutely aware of this potential and seeks to create works that maximize the viewer's experience.

It is this creative process, the makings of the virtual environment work of art, that Dena's work explores. Dena's documentation of that process will serve to inform us of how the creation of art with such far reaching boundaries occurs and can guide us as we introduce this new art form to our students.