Omaste Witkowski always begins with photographs. As a professional Web designer, she works with all the standard tools and techniques, but in December 2012, a new avenue opened up. A business owner wanted to put some of Witkowski’s macro photos in hotel suites. Up to that point, Witkowski was only a Sunday photographer, taking shots on the weekend to complement her day job. But after this new opportunity arose, she built her own website (http://omaste-witkowski.artistwebsites.com) and began accumulating hundreds of abstract fine-art images, rooted in photography, but all of which she end-manipulates in Photoshop. Now her work is for sale in bakeries, glass shops, galleries, and hotels. One of her most gratifying sales was to a bride who used Witkowski’s design on the skis the bride wore to get married in. Not a bad goal for a graphic designer.

“I was pleasantly surprised that people seemed to connect with my work and I was able to start selling it as soon as I listed it online,” she said. “I hadn’t realized how much I loved creating art and was also blessed to have so many people reach out to me and enjoy my work. It makes my day when I get a message that I helped someone with my art.”

So, Witkowski regularly hits the streets and infiltrates nature, armed with only a camera. Macro shots are a favorite technique, after which she implements any number of digital-manipulation schemes, primarily to produce images that don’t even resemble the original source.

“I am like a kid in a candy shop with technology and digital images,” she admits. “I get so excited when I create. My favorite thing to do is to say, ‘I wonder what will happen if I …’ So, I am endlessly coming up with new ideas and applying them to my photographs and digital designs. My only regret is that there is not enough time in a day to express all that is in my imagination.”

Winning Titles
Witkowski’s images often come with elaborate titles. In the case of the cover image, Passionate Explosion of Colorful Reality, the title emerged as part of the creative process. Witkowski says this is often the case.

“The title always comes to me when I look at the picture I create,” Witkowski explains. “I start with the colors I want and then I use a Wacom tablet and the Photoshop Liquify filter.”

After creating a design with shapes and colors, Witkowski converts it into a pattern of some sort, before applying filters for texture and color modification. Admitting she feels her way through the process, she improvises her way through Photoshop tools.
“I move through the different settings and tools in Photoshop and adjust until I know that I am done,” she says. “Then I look at it and I always have a title that pops into my head. I believe that the image has a certain energy that defines it. I try to give a meaning to it by the words I use to describe it.”

Speaking of energy, Past Present and Future (see Figure 1) resides in a gallery called Abstract Healing Art on Witkowski’s website. Having been through a great deal of personal challenges, and having used digital art as part of her own healing process, she creates this line of work hoping that others might experience healing energy.

“When I create [art] I am soothed by it,” she explains. “I am working with colors and shapes, and my mind has a chance to just let go. I allow the image to let me know what it wants to be. When I am done creating it, I will write about it in words that I hope will resonate with others.”

Viewers often provide feedback through Witkowski’s website, claiming they’ve connected with the healing energy and that it has helped with their own life struggles. So, apparently it’s working.

“This makes me feel very happy,” Witkowski says. “I want to make the world a better place in any way I can, and if a pretty picture is an option, then I have done that.”

True Love (see Figure 2) also began with a photograph. Witkowski zoomed in on a piece of glass artwork by Garth Mudge of Glassworks in Winthrop, Washington, and used a macro lens. Then she went in by hand and painted over the original image before applying Photoshop filters to enhance the brushstrokes.

“The colors are vivid and alive due to the way that I am illuminating the glass art as I am taking the picture,” she writes on her website. “In a way I am photographing the light as it passes through the object. ... I almost feel like an archeologist as I explore a small hidden world and reveal the treasures within.”

Budding Beauty (see Figure 3) exudes a different sentiment altogether. The luminous green aura evokes an almost fairy-tale-like vibe. In this case, Witkowski says she began with a sunflower bud, another example of photographing a normal image and then transforming it into something completely different through Photoshop filters and processing. In this case, the Fractalius plug-in worked wonders, and additional Photoshop filters helped optimize the color.

Future Refining
Witkowski carries her camera wherever she goes, often taking hundreds, if not thousands, of shots a week. As a result, she has seven Adobe Lightroom photo catalogs with tens of thousands of pictures. She creates around 10 images for every one that winds up in her online portfolio.

“I have pretty high standards for what I publish and try to only make it my ‘best work.’ So I am constantly refining my style and techniques. Lots of trial and error. It is really helpful to get so much feedback via social media and the Internet. I can tell pretty quickly what will work and what doesn’t by the reaction I get on my various pages.”

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