



Vision 10 from the Wandering in Desert Series by Zoe Cohen



Child's Play by Tremain Smith

InLiquid: Connecting Artists & Audiences

By Beth S. Buxbaum

Rachel Zimmerman's passion for art began at an early age, a very early age—with a toy camera she received when she was a year old. "I knew I wanted to be a photographer by the time I was 8 or 9," she says. Rachel virtually grew up on Penn's campus where her father was head of the MRI department at CHOP, but she got her BFA from NYU. After graduating in 1989, she stayed in New York, thinking it was the place to pursue her career as a photographer. "I worked in a few galleries, and also did some bartending, catering and retail," she remembers, the sighs still evident 20 years later. "It's just so difficult to break into the art world, especially in New York."

The following year, Rachel returned to Philly, hoping she would have a different experience. Not so. After a short stint doing black and white prints for physicians at Children's Hospital she decided to start her own business, and Studio Z Designs was launched with her husband, a graphic designer. But Rachel was still searching for a way to break into the arts in Philadelphia and to help others do the same. "I realized that Philly had a dynamic arts community, but it was underground, like an insider's thing," Rachel explains. With fewer galleries and other art-oriented venues than NYC, recent art school graduates and other emerging artists had limited options for becoming known in Philly. But, says Rachel, "I believed in Philly's potential to become a notable venue for emerging artists and I believed in giving unknowns a chance." She began to conceptualize a website that would serve as a hub and resource for artists, "a site where artists could connect with each other and the local art world as well as have a place for emerging artists to showcase their work."



In 1999 she founded InLiquid.com, a non-profit 501(c)(3) membership organization dedicated to providing just those opportunities and more for visual artists and designers. The site serves as a free public hub for arts information and resources, and makes the visual arts more accessible to a broader audience—giving the public immediate access to view the portfolios of hundreds of artists. InLiquid has an extensive online collection of work by local, national and international artists, from the well known to recent art grads, representing a wide range of styles and approaches. The site also has gallery listings, articles, reviews, art-

ist resources, links and discussions, and acts as a clearinghouse for information on the city's numerous artists' collaboratives and sends out a weekly newsletter.

But Rachel didn't stop there—"To create a vibrant arts community, we need to have more than just an online presence," she says—so InLiquid also nurtures the creative community through a continuing series of venue-based art exhibitions and events, as well as fundraisers. On June 12 and 13, the 11th annual Art for the Cash Poor Artist show and sale will be held at the Crane Arts Building at 1400 N. American Street; the artists themselves will show and sell work priced under \$199.

"We have to educate the community," Rachel states, "and to participate and be more involved in the arts, including purchasing art and attending art events." Exposure, information and accessibility all play a major part in Rachel's vision for Philadelphia. "How do we create a sustainable art economy in this city? If we want more graduates to stay here, then more jobs need to be created. All these elements are tied together," she says. ©