

So You Want to Collaborate?

by Pixeladies (Deb Cashatt and Kris Sazaki)

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Host Susan Brubaker Knapp with quilt artists Kris Sazaki (center) and Deb Cashatt (right)

Collaborating on art is indeed more art than science. But you are more likely to be successful in your collaborative endeavors if you take the time up front to work out some fundamental questions. However, don't think you have to have all the answers before you start. Your goals and methods of collaboration may change over time as you work more together.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO COLLABORATE?

- Do you need to produce more work for sale?
- Do you want to challenge yourself creatively?
- Do you want the creative support of others?

Think about what advantages (and disadvantages) collaboration can bring to you and your artistic journey. Are you still willing to collaborate? It is not necessary for you and your collaborative partner(s) to have the same reason to collaborate, but knowing your reasons to collaborate will help you define your collective goals.

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO COLLABORATE WITH?

- One person?
- A group?

How well do you know this person/these people? Do you know them well enough to express your feelings, opinions, and desires during the collaboration? Are they willing to sit down and set specific goals with you? Will they follow through on your mutual plans? Will you produce this work under a collective name or your individual names?

HOW LONG WOULD YOU LIKE TO COLLABORATE?

- For one project only?
- For a series?
- Ongoing?

There are no rules to collaboration. It's surely easiest to first collaborate on a single project. A first collaboration can result in a collaborative series or even an ongoing collaboration. Have you agreed that you can pursue

individual creative work while you are collaborating?

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO COLLABORATE?

- Geographically together in a studio?
- Online?

Where you collaborate depends on how you envision bringing the project from idea to fabrication. There are virtually so many avenues nowadays to collaborate that much of what you do can be accomplished oceans apart. Will you work on the same piece? Will you make individual artworks to exhibit together? In any case, think about the costs involved in shipping artwork to and from your respective studios and to exhibition venues.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO COLLABORATE?

- Will you work on part of a piece or pieces individually?
- Will you work on all aspects of the piece or pieces together?

- How will you work through differences of opinion?
- Will you set specific goals?
- Will you set specific deadlines?
- What will you do/not do in common?
- How will you define who does what?
Are you okay with doing only parts of a project and not everything?

Define how you will work creatively. Be willing to sacrifice your own comfort to attain your mutual goals. How you collaborate may differ with different projects even if you have the same collaborative partner(s). Don't forget to discuss the non-artistic aspects of collaboration: studio cleaning, research, exhibition submissions, etc.

WHAT WILL YOU COLLABORATE ON?

- What topics/themes do you want to explore?
- How will you determine which topics/themes you will attempt together?
- Do you want to collaborate in one medium only or are you willing to explore different media in your collaboration?

Have you discussed who takes ownership of any work product? Will you periodically assess your collaborative work? Has your collaboration answered the first question of "why collaborate"?

We hope these questions will help you in forming partnerships with other artists. Good luck in your collaborative efforts!

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