

Creative Creatures

The ideas and the work of the American and European painters, songwriters, photographers, fiction and non-fiction authors, musicians, film makers, architects, designers, poets, and dreamers I met during my 20 years in America.



35 / Mizja Haak, graphic designer, color manager, Rijswijk, the Netherlands

The product is called 'Colorativa HDRP' (High Definition Range Printing) and his consultancy based in old town Rijswijk near The Hague, the Netherlands is named after it, Colorativa. The product Colorativa HDRP is rather a system based on combining especially developed design techniques with the application of newly created, special print inks. Crazy enough, part of the system originated in Japan, while the inks are based on a traditional Icelandic paint formula and ink application. Its effects are called a designer's dream, a photographer's dream, a printer's dream, and a publisher's dream. What Colorativa HDRP does is optimize colors; commonly they tend to fade a little even in the best of print, or at least to differ from the originals or from the colors carefully defined by the design computer. With Colorativa HDRP the colors become pure, brilliant and transparent, and recreate the precise quality of original photographs and designs; the images become more alive than ever before.

He wasn't an eager high-school student, but he loved great food and had been able to order *Coquilles St. Jacques* and *Cuises de Grenouille Batavienne* in French since he was not yet eight years old. So, I was not stunned when my son Mizja told me, at age seventeen, he wanted to become a chef and could I please accompany him to the open house at the Rotterdam Cooking Academy? We walked into all classrooms and

nibbled at every little delicacy the students had prepared to show off their abilities, and with every bite I became happier with his choice of profession. As we left the school, I noticed that across the square the Rotterdam Graphic Arts School also had open house. "Let's have a look and see what they're doing," I proposed, I myself then a partner in a design studio in Amsterdam. We sauntered from class room to studio space to typesetting to lithography to print production--and an hour later he had changed his mind: *this* was the place where he wanted to be.

Mizja became a graphic designer in the early years of computer design, which means that he was lucky enough still to learn how to apply old customs and techniques. After finishing his studies, he worked for a publisher and printer. He ran a discotheque in his spare time meaning in the weekends' late nights and early mornings in an old cinema house he and a friend had transformed--and were kicked out of after they became too successful for the professional competition's taste (who went into the offense and sent alarming phone calls and anonymous citizens' complaints to the city police and councilmen all the time). And, luckily, he never lost his interest in *haute cuisine*.

He and a partner started their own design studio, 'Icoon' (= Icon) at age twenty-five in The Hague, just before Ans and I left on a one-way-ticket to the U.S. He came to visit us five or six times, traveled with us in California, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and west Texas, came to Kansas when we were living there and to Abiquiu in the first year we settled in New Mexico. In between his extended travels he also spent many days in his father's favorite city, Paris, France until finally he decided to become a somewhat more serious person. As art director at a publishing and printing house in The Hague he learned how to lead a team and how to manage complicated design and print preproduction, and he became a design development middle man between Japanese automotive exporters and their European market. After meetings in Tokyo he would email me extensively about the qualities of the Japanese cuisine just to make me feel miserable and believe I was missing something good. I struck back from Mexican restaurants eating fajitas instead of shabu-shabu and drinking Negra Modelo and tequila instead of Kirin and sake.

Being independent, not working *under* someone but *for* clients, was never far from his thoughts. Today, he is a freelance designer and print production consultant specialized in color management. His Japanese experiences and contacts sent him into this new professional direction and set him to develop this new preproduction and print process, Colorativa HDRP. Nowadays, most of his clients are publishers of books and magazines that aim at a top-of-the-bill audience, which they want to impress with the highest quality of product advertising and color photography: fashion houses, producers of perfumes and other luxury goods, as well as publishers who target owners of private jets or yachts; creative photographers and other visual artists choose Colorativa's quality for their high-end books and rare, limited editions.

Mizja's best product is, of course, my grandson Raven (I am not trying to belittle Mizja's Belgian wife Maya's input; while Mizja takes Raven out of bounds, she takes care of his intellectual growth). The little guy, now age seven, was a swimmer and a diver before he became six, got his first surf board soon after, and recently started playing a nasty game of pool. He's in school in The Hague close to where I myself once lived and was educated; it is a Roman Catholic school, which means he comes home singing songs his Mom, an agnostic Flemish socialist, would rather not hear; yet she has to admit the schooling is the very best. Anyway, the result of this Dutch / Flemish confrontation tends to become a human species in its own, in the high definition range.

Ton Haak, August 2013