

Journals? Prints? Magnets? Virtual inventory!

Saturday, 14 January 2006

A new adventure for me, I have opened up a shop at CaféPress.com.

The idea behind this site is wonderful! Here's how it works... CaféPress.com provides a (limited) bunch of real, "blank" inventory. People (many people!) provide "real" digital images, choose the inventory items onto which these designs should be applied, provide descriptions, determine pricing (invariable CaféPress base price + variable design use cost). CaféPress provides disk space for the images, manages the database of virtual inventory, offers an overall web "store", provides site visitors with a search engine through which they can browse through the "merchandise". And CaféPress handles the shopping carts, the payments, the shipping.

In other "words"...

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In this case, their "blank" journal stock + my design = 'Collective Spirit /1' Journal!

I think the idea is simple and brilliant. It allows artists/designers to think "merchandise" without needing to carry any "real" inventory. It provides merchandise holders (even if the merchandise is virtual) with a "shop" that has a web presence. It provides people looking for all sorts of different art/design based "things", a central place to search.

On the money side of things, the idea here too is simple and clear. Anyone can open a shop on the site for free. Of course it is to CaféPress' advantage to have lots and lots of designs available so this makes sense. And/but they do also offer a "premium shop" for a "small fee" that allows shopowners quite a large reign over the look and overall layout of their "store". For this they make it easy for non HTML shopowners and they allow HTML shopowners open access to most of the design. Very cool.

Once someone has a shop, they (the "shopowner") can upload images and begin to determine their inventory. Again, all of this is very well laid out with help available throughout if someone needs it. All merchandise items have a set base price that is the minimum anyone can ask for these items. Above and beyond this, it is up to shopowner to decide how much they want to ask for the use of their image should anyone decide to purchase the item. It is this difference that is paid to shopowners (with the base price being kept by CaféPress). And for "premium shopowners", shop fee payment can be set up to be taken monthly from any money made by the shop. Again, a smart set-up according to me.

All of this means that basically everyone wins. And... it provides something -- virtual inventory -- that would not have otherwise existed.

They also afford people a way to publish books. Similar to the design based items, these books are made up virtually

(with uploaded text) until someone purchases it.

So... all of that written, do take a look around the CaféPress.com site and if you're interested, around my shop Created Expression @ CaféPress.com. And do let me know what you think about any of this.

(And... yes... you will find a couple of mugs and t-shirts :o)

And... does anyone know of a "place" like this for archival quality digital prints that don't oblige frames???