

**ANNIE KNIGHT (A.K.A. MABLE), PUBLISHER/EDITOR OF DIGRESS**

**Angela:** Why and how did you start *Digress*?

**Annie:** First off, I'll address the "why" part of your question. I started *Digress* for a few reasons: (1) the Riverside art scene is extremely underrepresented, no thanks to the "art friendly" Press-Enterprise [Riverside's "official" newspaper]; (2) I wanted to start a portfolio of sorts to help give my writing career a kick in the pants; (3) I wanted to learn more about computers and graphic design; and (4) I wanted to become a more active member of the art community by contributing my art, which I've come to learn includes desktop publishing..

As for how, I simply began to approach local artists at the RUPO readings, started taking a camera and notepad with me to shows (art, music, and theater shows, that is), hit my English comrades and writing pals up for writing stories, poetry, and features for the zine, and finally (since I evaded the financial reality of the publication for as long as I could) I started to hit up some local galleries, coffee shops, and music shops to buy ads. However, the ads weren't very successful at all until the second issue when people were able to view a hard copy of the vision I had been only talking about to them).

**Angela:** What was your original vision for *Digress*?

**Annie:** *Digress* was meant to be a one-time deal. My original vision for *Digress* was actually pretty fuzzy. I wanted it to be a free forum for all local artists, especially "underground" and DIY artists. But really, I had no idea what was gonna happen except that it had better be something worthy of the local art I gain so much inspiration from. So, I guess my original vision did not span far beyond me publishing a cool zine that others might not feel ashamed for showing their art in. I was so wrapped up in figuring out how to juggle attending shows that represented as many facets of Riverside's art scene as possible, learning the desktop publishing program I was using at the time, coordinating interviews, begging people to meet their deadlines (that never gets better!), and fitting everything into 24 pages (11x17 inches never seemed so small before), that I became submerged by my zine. But, I really loved that. So, about a month before it was scheduled to print, I decided to have 3,000 copies made, and all of a sudden my audience became a lot bigger and I began to really feel the panic of having so many readers, most of whom I did not know. My innocent vision for *Digress* began to have all these strings attached to it. Would I be granting my readers a variety of perspectives, or would my personal agenda annoyingly demand my readers to view the artists and art covered in *Digress* in a very jaded light? Would I be able to maintain the free and open forum I had been espousing to people waiting to see the first issue?

But, after a couple issues had been published, I began to realize that I could only do my best to incorporate as many creative voices and visions into *Digress*. Those left out of one issue could be a part of the next issue. I figured that this attitude would enable me to put less energy into worrying about what I didn't cover and more energy into spending quality time at shows and with artists whose work I really admired instead of trying to catch six art shows in one night (I think that was my scary record).

**Angela:** How did you choose what to print?

**Annie:** I would print anything that contributors felt was their art (from painting to their jobs) unless I felt it spurred hatred towards others or a group in particular.

**Angela:** How was the writing you did shaped by the Riverside art scene?

**Annie:** Well, since the subject matter of *Digress* was the Riverside art scene, this, and the individuals who make up the scene, was the main source of inspiration and ideas for my writing material. More importantly, though, the Riverside art scene has the potential to be a pinnacle of creativity as it knows how to make a fabulous, explosive art scene with very little support from the city and its main local newspaper. The Riverside art scene has true DIY roots underlying it, which made me realize that I could be doing the same with my writing.

**Angela:** Do you think DIY is connected to agency, or achieving "voice"? If so, how?

**Annie:** DIY is definitely connected to agency in that deciding to do something yourself or create something yourself, and to take the initiative to learn what's involved in making it happen equates to you creating the existence you want for yourself. Thusly, creating your own existence is self-agency. What's more, by creating your own existence and living it, inevitably you'll be explaining your actions to others who may be turned on to your way (even those who don't necessarily jive with "your way" or who are questioning your actions and motives) because you are the creator of what you've done or brought to fruition. I think, in this sense, creating an independent existence for yourself or even a piece of art makes you able to express more to others and to yourself about yourself because you've chosen the active role of being the creator of who you're going to be and what you're going to present about yourself. Living a DIY lifestyle puts you in the position of being a creator and personal activist for yourself and others around you. To me, this all streamlines into the voice that I interpret to be true courage—the courage to do and the courage to defend your actions.

**Angela:** Give some tips on networking/how to actively participate in the Riverside arts scene to the young upstart yearning to get involved.

**Annie:** Go to as many local happenings (whether that be at a small gallery, someone's house, the local coffee houses poetry reading, or the local dive bar to see a band play or DJs spin) as possible!

If you possess a talent (even talking up shows and art events is a talent in and of itself!) that can in any way benefit or help out local artists and their causes (even emailing friends about upcoming shows is a big help!) donate some of your time and energy (Can you write? Do a write-up about a show or make a flyer for a show to distribute amongst your friends, family, and co-workers. Post shows and events on your personal web sites or even help a fellow artist design a web site as they are probably too busy with the creating of their art to worry about such details.)

Host a gathering or event at your house or apartment, if you can. Even if you don't feel you have art to offer to the community, your time and space is always going to be appreciated and needed.

**Angela:** What's your opinion of the venues/galleries in Riverside?

**Annie:** Many of the venues in Riverside are so mainstream that they tend to be very critical and not very understanding or appreciative of independent art and music. I suppose there's the looming fear of having big crowds of crazy kids in your venue. But, hey, they're bringing in business with their art. Luckily, there are a couple venues in the city that kindly offer their space with little to no restricting conditions to their surrounding art community.

**Angela:** Why do you think that a city like Riverside has such a strong DIY ethic?

**Annie:** Because, we have to. There's not a great citywide commitment and investment in the arts that adamantly supports its culture and artists.