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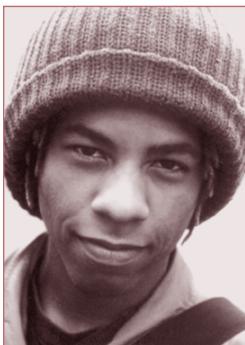
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INTERVIEW WITH ISHMAEL HALL

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A prism is defined as an object that splits light into a spectrum and then reflects and deviates it to project in various angles. Ishmael Hall has a prism mind- light is his source and technology his execution tool. With this combination, Hall has created an eclectic array of technological art that transcends what students can absorb in an ordinary lecture.

Ishmael Hall

"I learned to become proficient by mostly teaching myself and buying books," Hall, a senior graphic communication major at Cal Poly, said. "Classes have substantiated that learning, and sharing ideas with other people has also taught me more about digital communication technology." Hall said that digital media is enriched communication that can show a lot of emotion and convey ideas more easily, because it can combine so many elements of sight and sound. He is currently working on a plethora of projects, including one for a Chemistry 124 class. "The professor uses Flash animation in her overhead projection," Hall said. "Science comes to life because the molecules and electrons are animated. Students can get a visual idea of what is happening. It is not static- you can actually see the electrons get excited and take the quantum leap."

In addition to helping out with visualization of concepts for classes, Hall is also working on his portfolio, which includes a few video clients. Additionally, he is maintaining four Web sites and works for Digital Services in the Kennedy Library, which is a student work group made up of programmers and designers who assist faculty and staff by creating digital teaching tools, videos, and Web sites.

"My favorite tool is the digital camera," Hall said. "The Canon GL2 has very high resolution, great picture quality, and even has manual focus. Also, the Heidelberg Quickmaster DI in the Graphic Commnunication Department is one of my favorites, it is a digital printing press that has variable imaging capabilities while maintaining lithographic quality."

Despite his expertise with digital jargon, Hall still enjoys using his old Canon FTb that his mom used to take pictures with for photography class at UC Berkeley in the '70s. He shoots stills with it and then scans the negatives into his computer in order to make adjustments and add digital effects. "In the digital field there is a wide gamut of tools, from digital printing presses, to Web sites, and video" he said. "But there is more on the horizon with interactive video, a combination of the Web and film. It will allow people to navigate through the story and will have full fluid motion."

Hall said that there is a wide array of knowledge to acquire in the digital field and that he has not found one specific area to devote his full attention. He said that by being versatile he is able to get a

taste of all aspects." There are multiple operating systems, thousands of file types and still many compatibility issues; the key is to be strong in digital management," Hall said. "There is a lot of pioneering in this field, I can think of hundreds of improvements for software, hardware, and electronics. The work becomes more valuable the more time you put into it, but there is really nothing physically created. So you have to practice data redundancy: save and make copies of on a second storage device. Have backups, because sometimes, for what ever reason, it's 'poof, all gone.'" As a method for expressing ideas, Hall said that digital communication technology is a very powerful tool. "The web is broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in more and more places around the world. It is a rich media and can be broadcast at a low cost. It is a step in a good direction."

Despite his proficiency of several mediums in digital technology, Hall said that he would like to become more adept in 3-Dimensional work, which he has just begun to implement into his next portfolio site. He said that digital technology has allowed him to manufacture important information, and help share beautiful and positive ideas. In regards to the future, Hall said that he wants to utilize his talents to promote ideas of peace, because our media is saturated with too many negative ideas.

When asked what inspires him, he responded with two words. "The unknown," he said. "The fact that you start out with nothing and then when you are done there is something, that you created. What you create along the way is a path- a story. I am the author and my story has multiple components to it." Hall said that digital media has the ability to communicate so much more because an observer can actually see someone's face talking, over a beautiful sunset, with scrolling messages, and audio, and interaction.

"Lighting is what creates what we see," he said. "Light is paint, surface is canvas. I paint with light. I can change how people see things. The depth of digital media surpasses reading a book, although reading a book has its unique qualities." Hall said that one day he would like to travel the world and have the opportunity to create works along the way. "Actually, I have done more traveling in my mind," he said. "I see nooks of nature that are tucked in between the cities and pristine forests tucked in between vast mountains, and I just see so much energy, a nesting place for creativity."

Hall said that nature is the ultimate perfection that technology tries to emulate. The Web transports information through the network just as our veins transport oxygen, or rivers, water to the ocean. He also said that while we understand technology, we will never be able to fully understand nature because we are not the ultimate creators, yet, technology can give us clues to understanding our true nature. "It is funny because I can sit in front of a computer for 12 hours, and then on the flip side I love to be outdoors, so I get up and ride my bike really fast through the wind," he said. "It is like jumping from a warm bath into a cold lake- variety of environment cultivates and expands material for creativity. Yeah, I like that contrast."

Sierra Zwald Fish is a Journalism Senior. She plans to study in Spain this summer and to graduate this coming December. She worked at the Mustang Daily as a reporter and photographer and plans to pursue a career in photo-journalism.