

HOW

DESIGN IDEAS AT WORK

INTERACTIVE
DESIGN
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WINNERS

breakfast at tiffany's



by Amy Gershoni



Sitting in Tiffany Shlain's San Francisco Potrero Hill "treehouse," we sip orange juice and sift through photos from six-plus years of Halloween's past. "I couldn't breathe in that costume, but it looked good," I say. "And by the way, HOW magazine wants a picture of you. What about this one?" I pull out a shot of the two of us hula hooping at Burning Man.

Tiffany Shlain is a digital-age Renaissance woman: founder and director of The Webby Awards, cofounder of the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, award-winning filmmaker, "Good Morning America" Internet expert, one of *Newsweek* magazine's "Women shaping the New Century."

sculptor and mother of beautiful 1-year-old Odessa. With all the titles and accolades, she remains grounded with a love of life, laughter and intellect.

OK, I *am* biased. Tiffany and I have been friends and collaborators for years. Today, watching the early spring bloom, we're talking about the state of the Web, the role of the creative professional and how we nurture our creativity.

ag: It's been eight years that you've been honoring the best of the Web, and we've all weathered some wild highs and lows. I think most people assume that the Internet-types mourn the boom.

ts: I'm glad all the hype is gone. I'd be lying if I said the big boom wasn't a crazy time, and it was fun to be a part of it. We started The Webby Awards before all the hype, remember—it was very fringe. Then the boom happened, and

the Internet got all this attention. But the focus was wrong: it was all about being a shopping mall. They were forgetting the power of the Web as a communication tool. And now what's cool is that it's not the hot thing, but the substantial thing. So many people are on it; we're seeing things online that we never could have imagined before.

ag: So without the hype, culture is naturally adapting the Web in its own time.

ts: Remember in the early days you used to see, "Click here"? People now know what a shopping cart is, they know to click. There's a certain lexicon—a visual language—that people adapt to each year. As the public understands more, designers can push further. The most exciting thing is that the more people use it, the more things can happen with it. The Internet is a very organic thing. One of the challenges creatively is that, unlike film or books

or architecture, nothing is finished. A TV show is done. A print ad is done. With the Web, creation is a living thing that's constantly changing. There's a very temporal aspect to this.

ag: This can be a mind-shift for creatives: design for change, design for collaboration.

ts: Even the term film production insinuates a beginning, middle and an end. But it's called *Web development*, I think, because it's constantly in development. It's never done. I'm a big proponent of reading Web logs. A lot of people don't realize what a goldmine it is to understand how people are interacting with your Web site. In newspapers, they write, "Continued on page 15." But unless they have spies in peo-

Two noted women of the Web share an intimate conversation about the evolution of the medium, the hottest new sites and the inspiration for their work. So pull up a chair with Tiffany Shlain and Amy Gershoni.

photography
by Jay Blakesberg