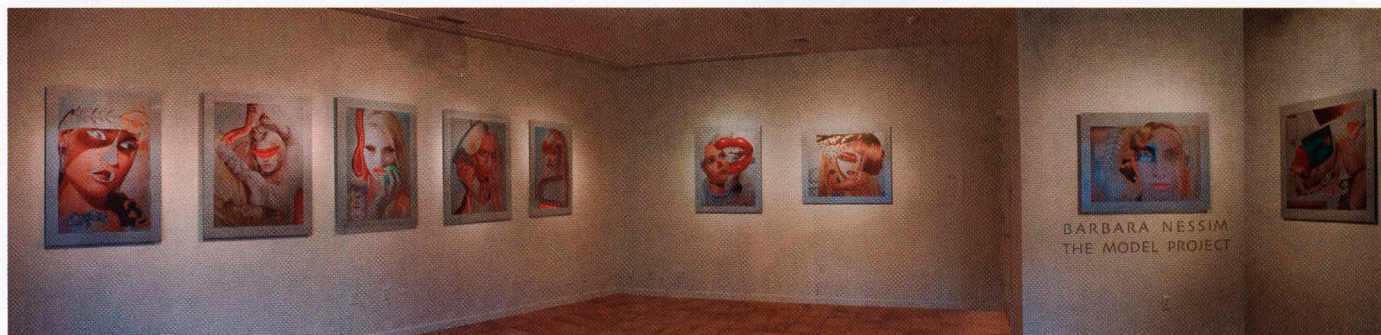




# Vision To Visuals

## The Model Project



### A cutting-edge display for a cutting-edge project

By Baldev Duggal

Illustration has long struggled to gain a distinct place for itself in the fine-art world. Perhaps because of its commercial applications in the advertising and entertainment industries that have rendered it into popular culture, illustration seems to have been silently stigmatized as inferior to the other fine arts—sculpture, painting and even photography.

Artist Barbara Nessim is a unique artist who has defied the conventional “silos” that have separated illustration and fine art for more than 30 years. Considered an influential visionary in the art world, Nessim’s exemplary contribution to illustration as art was recently recognized by the Norman Rockwell Museum when they nominated her their first Artist Laureate.

Barbara Nessim and Duggal share a relationship that goes all the way back to the '80s when we were the only digital-imaging house in New York City to enable artists to reproduce their digitally created work. Nessim was one of a handful of visionary artists who understood very early on the tremendous potential of digital technology to create sophisticated imagery. I was privileged to work with Nessim again after all these years to help launch her latest work—The Model Project.

The project was conceived as a conversation between Nessim and the



Courtesy of Duggal Imaging

Director of Duggal Select, Karl Rudisill, at her Soho studio and ended up as a unique two-year partnership leading to an exhibition of her prints and a book. When Rudisill first saw Nessim’s studio bathed in bright illumination from the skylights, he proposed that she photograph fashion models in this natural light and imbibe them in her artwork. Nessim, whose large-scale digital paintings often have a feminine form underlying them, had never brought in fashion photography to her work. She loved the idea and worked with Rudisill over six months to develop the project further.

The Duggal Select team employed their extensive experience in fashion projects, from casting and shooting to printing and publicity, to assemble a team of models and hair and makeup stylists, and conducted the photo shoot at Nessim’s studio. Following the photo shoot, Nessim transformed each photograph of the models into a

fine-art collage, each with a surreal sensibility that symbolizes Nessim’s distinctive avant-garde style. After rendering these photographs into digital collages, she worked with the Duggal team to explore the spectrum of technological possibilities for reproducing her images with the right combination of surface and substrate.

We took Nessim on a “Tour De Duggal” so she could—as an artist—get an instinctive feel for the latest technologies and, based on her extensive digital experience, gauge the right choice for her new collection. She was one of the few artists who we also took to our Brooklyn headquarters where we have more than 45,000 square feet of production space dedicated to fine-art reproductions.

We produced several samples for Nessim on different materials, including eco-friendly substrates, as well as metallic papers, high-end inkjets, digital-C prints and printing

TOP: Barbara Nessim’s Model Project; ABOVE: Collage of the show’s opening.

her images directly onto aluminum sheets. Nessim was very excited by the image quality on aluminum sheets and decided to print the entire new collection on aluminum.

While my printers have mastered the art of perfect color reproduction on aluminum sheets, handling the sheets turned out to be more challenging. Each sheet had to be meticulously handled with the “Duggal White Glove” treatment. Slight smudges, fingerprints or a minor dent or ding would render the piece unusable and it would have to be redone. We had to do three pieces over due to the slightest material flaws to achieve this level of perfection. The treated aluminum plates have a special coating that causes a chemical reaction in the ink to harden upon contact with the surface of the aluminum plates. This treatment and process ensure the archival requirements for gallery-quality reproductions.

Once the direct-to-substrate printing was completed, one-inch, framed aluminum brackets were adhered to the back of the sheets for floating installation in the gallery, giving the appearance of prints floating off the wall. Additionally, these brackets have to be carefully attached to avoid any possibilities of damaging the art face side. This process isn't set up for multiple copies printed simultaneously. Each piece had to be handled separately from start to finish. Our technicians had to stand over each original as it was being printed to ensure the eventual level of perfection.

Next came the most critical, yet unacknowledged aspect of the entire life cycle of an art project—orchestrating packaging and transporting sensitive artwork to the exhibit without damaging the pieces. My mounting team custom-designed ultra-thick, wooden crates fabricated with heavy-duty hinges and twist-locking mechanisms to hold the artwork in place during shipping and transporting. Mounting and shipping are in some ways the most critical aspects of an art

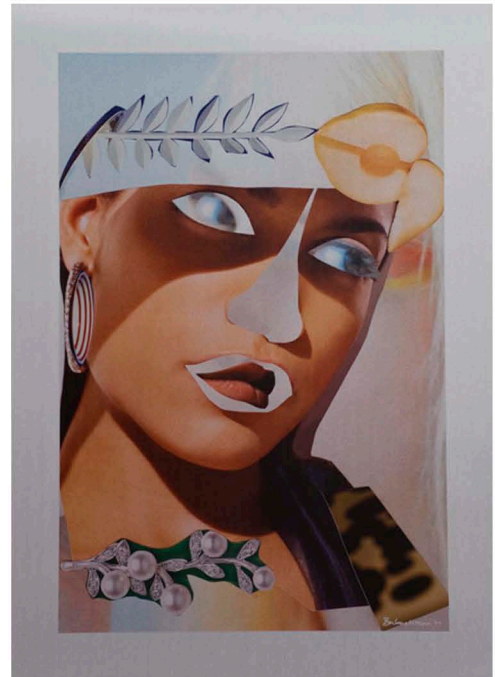
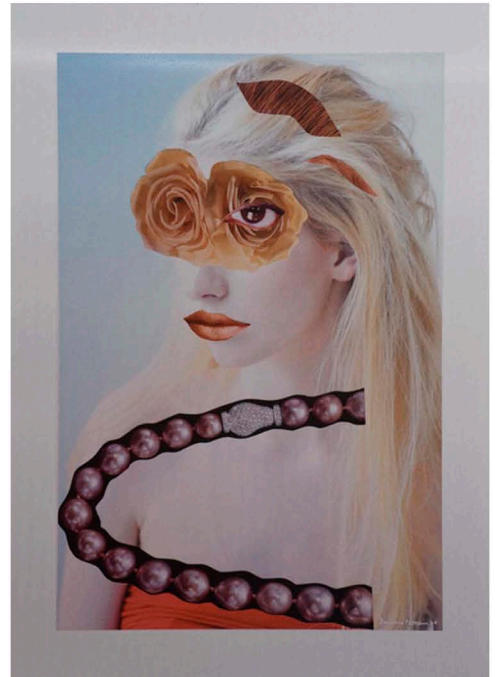
project. The tremendous effort that's involved in the conception of an art project through to the printing and reproduction can all be challenged by the packing process where even the smallest dent renders a piece of art damaged and unusable.

Nessim's new work received a grand and warm welcome at the Sienna Gallery in Lenox, Mass. Among the many comments on the exhibition, the one that was most beautiful read, “Opulent jewels, bold colors, and classic beauty come together in these collages to make permanent an ethereal moment.”

Nessim received tremendous interest from various galleries after the launch of her show. She immediately ordered another copy of the entire collection to be reproduced. I've heard that at least one of the pieces from the collection will be placed in one of New York's newest lavish hotel lobbies.

To look back on the past four decades and see how technology has evolved, and to assist innovative artists like Barbara Nessim who were my inspiration early on to enter the digital-imaging space, makes me feel thrilled to be able to work with her. To be able to offer Nessim and the world of art an innovative process, a new fine-art genre in digital image-making, is what I thrive on. As Nessim's art facilitates “understanding the role of illustration in shaping and reflecting American culture,” I'm proud to be able to offer her the cutting-edge technologies and possibilities that make her vision come alive. DPP

*Baldev Duggal, president and founder of Duggal, has been innovating visual solutions for image-makers for more than 40 years. Credited with building and designing the industry's first dip-and-dunk processing machine, Duggal has maintained his status as a leader in the imaging business and is heralded for outstanding service by consumer and trade magazines alike. With digital capabilities reaching worldwide, his headquarters covers a block on West 23rd Street in New York City.*



\*Note from the artist:

“The Model Project” is on view at DFN Gallery, 74 East 79th Street, New York, NY 10075, from November 11 – December 5, 2009. For more information, visit [www.themodelproject.net](http://www.themodelproject.net) or [www.barbaranessim.com](http://www.barbaranessim.com)