

# Winners comment...

Have you submitted your portfolio yet? Our [Designing Women](#) feature happens each year in March and April, in honor of [Women's History Month](#)! We invite your [comments](#)

## NEVER! fall "In Love" with your designs

### Sage advice from Trish, the Contemporary-Native

Trish Schaefer is a Native American Indian Commercial Artist, who has been creating art at the commercial level for over 25 years. She hales from South Dakota, where she graduated from the Lower Brule Indian Reservation to Black Hills State University. She received the bulk of her working experience in Houston, Texas, before moving on to Phoenix, Arizona, where her creative studios are located today.

But Trish's submission wasn't about her portfolio, but rather about passing along this all-important message to all young designers. Her message echoes one that I learned long ago, when my design professor impressed this rule upon me:

*"Nothing is precious: no design, no layout, no photograph. You can always improve it and move on to the next, better, step"*

Trish writes:

#### Contemporary-Native



I can't talk about my professional life without talking about where I come from. I grew up on the [Lower Brule Indian Reservation](#) in South Dakota\*. My dad, a 'Cowboy', worked as a farm laborer. He made just under \$10,000 a year to support a family of five. He ran a very small herd of cattle on the side. My mom raised us and pigs (our biggest source of income). Our house (provided by my dad's employer) was an old homestead that had been added on to at different times. My room was in the third attic. In the winter I slept with a snow drift at the end of my bed. My two sisters and I helped work the cattle and pigs at our grandmother's place. We were up before dawn doing chores, then off to school, then more chores, prepare dinner, do homework, back down to do chores and finally bed. I have been tired, weary and drained, and I loved it all.

As poor as we were, I was also a big fish in a small pond as an artist. I won my first logo contest at the age of 11. I drew campaign posters for local county government candidates, did school program covers, and designed the senior sweatshirts all four years of high school. I even kept samples for my 'portfolio'. I still have the logo I designed at 11.

Then college happened. I sold my horse and saddle and went to [Black Hills State College](#) in [Spearfish, SD](#). They had just instituted a [Commercial Art](#) Associates degree that I signed up for. I was just an artist from the river breaks with no previous 'artistic instruction' -- expected to know primary colors, basic art techniques, etc. I knew nothing and ultimately failed. I ended up on my own without enough experience to qualify for a waitressing job, but I persevered. I went back to college and graduated with the Commercial Art Associates degree, a BS for Communications Art with a Graphics Emphasis and a Psychology minor.

I was never a kid with big dreams; I liked our life even if it was hard. My talent for graphic design and consequent career took me pleasantly by surprise. Every step up has been wonderful and hard earned. Today I am both a pig farmer's daughter AND a great graphic artist.

#### I feel very, very strongly about this:

Never fall *"In Love"* with your designs. Love them, but be able to let them go. If the client butchers the design later, be at peace. I've seen too many great artists working at discount-mart because they could not let go.

For some potentially great designers/artists, emotionally they cannot separate from their art. They cannot give their design the client's personality or allow a client to take possession. For true artists every design has a piece of your soul in it. It is true. But this is not a romance. Being a starving artist is not fun or romantic. You have to decide if you want to design as a career... then you have to be able to let go.

Obviously, there are certain things you will not, as a professional, let happen to your design, but in the end your client will own the design, not you. I think every designer out there has a body of work that paid them well, but they would rather die than tell the world that they designed any of it. Not all design is high art. Not all design is intelligent or clever. Not all clients are artistic, intelligent or clever. Such is the way of design.

For those working their way up, you'll get to a place where you can start to exert more and more control. Your education, training and, above all, experience (and hopefully body of work), will back you up when dealing with clients. They are paying you for your talent AND professional know-how.

If you have learned, if you do pay attention to design and trends, if you know this business... it will show. And more and more people will seek you out for your particular brand of design. Then the control will all be your's and you can love your designs as they deserve.

#### Trish

Patricia (Trish) R. Schaefer

Trish works on a PC, using primarily FreeHand; and a collection of others.  
[www.contemporary-native.com](http://www.contemporary-native.com)

#### Designing Women

Fred surfs the sites, scenes and words of this year's Designing Women submissions



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