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Old Town Lansing is Making Space for Creative Talent

BY: JACK HELDER, 11/14/2007



Smile. A new photographic studio has opened in Lansing, and if you've got a yen for the lens, the studio could be yours – at least to use.

[Perspective2](#) at 329 West Grand River in Old Town sports two completely equipped studios. Studio A has hardwood floors, a Chicago brick wall, and a modern, full-service kitchen that makes it great for both special events and photo shoots. Studio B lays out more than 1000 sq. ft. of unobstructed space that is adaptable to suit the imagination. Both studios come complete with a studio lighting package.

It's all inspired by the vision of Lynne Brown, owner of [Media Graphics](#), and an award-winning designer and photographer in the area for 20 years.

"Photographic studios are very expensive to have if you are an individual photographer," says Brown. "You really have to use that space over and over to make the studio and equipment

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pay for itself, and most photographers can't afford that. So I started thinking about some sort of collaborative space."

She did some research, and found that the Greater Lansing area has more than 3,000 photographers. A little more research told her that only about three to four percent of those photographers actually have a studio they can call their own. So Brown did a little dreaming.

"How great would it be to have collaborative studio space where you've got access to the equipment, the lighting, and other tools? You would come in and be part of a membership where you'd actually have classes that were offered and you'd have people to show you what the equipment is and how to use it. Where there would be dressing rooms for talent, a full kitchen, and lots of other amenities a professional studio has."

Voila! The concept for Perspective2 was born, and its reputation and range of people excited about its potential uses has been growing since.

In October, the [Mid-Michigan Creative Alliance](#) held its first meeting of the year in Studio A to show the international television [Clio Awards](#) reel and conduct a little business.

"It's great space," says Barb Mohler, secretary for the Mid-Michigan Creative Alliance. "It's perfect for us, because we appeal to a membership of creative people working in the marketing and advertising industry around Greater Lansing. We had around 60 local creatives show up."

In fact, the Alliance liked it so much that it's November meeting was also held at Perspective2, featuring a presentation by Miami-based [Crispin Porter + Bogusky](#), a small, boutique agency that's been named Agency of the Year by [Advertising Age](#), and has a client list most agencies would give their right arm for.

The Mid-Michigan Creative Alliance plans to use the space for additional meetings throughout the year. Matt Martin is a board member for the Alliance, and a partner in [Aphic Film & Digital](#), a full-service film and video production company on Lansing's Eastside that recently shot and produced the video for [Nelly Furtado](#)'s hit single, "Do It." (Watch the video clip [here](#).)

"Perspective2 is a great meeting venue," says Martin. "We might even do some shooting there, if the project fits – that old-school brick wall is lofty-cool."

His view is echoed by Camron Gnass, owner and strategist of [Vision Creative](#) in Lansing. In fact, he finds the Perspective2 space and collaborative concept typical of the way the Lansing area has become a great place for talented people.

"I've been to lots of towns – judging [ADDYs](#) or for business – and I tell you what, there are as many creative thinkers in this town as any town I've been in," says Gnass. "We may not have as many resources of firms buying creative, but there are lots of great thinkers here. In fact, the culture around Lansing in general is incredible, and rivals any big city – I don't know if you want to call it Culture per Capita, or whatever. We have it here – art, culture, music, whatever."

Julie DeRosa, an art director with [Pace & Partners](#), is also impressed with Perspective2 – and with Lansing, and she's also seen some hot spots for creativity. A Michigan native, DeRosa has an M.S. degree in art direction from the Adcenter, Virginia Commonwealth University, and a BFA in graphic design and photography from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. She's built her portfolio in Los Angeles, Winston-Salem, and Detroit. When she attended the Alliance meetings at Perspective2, and liked what she saw.

"I loved the space. I thought it was very comfortable, open and airy, and I liked the use of natural sunlight. It will be a great place for photographers," says DeRosa. "It really reminded me of places around the east coast."

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Just what Lynne Brown would like to hear, after her long journey of building and expanding the original “collaborative space” concept.



When the idea was born, Lynne was sharing space with fellow designers Jen Estill and Amy Moore at [Redhead Design Studio](#), also in Old Town. Just down the street was a secondhand store that was a long way from chic, but Brown saw possibilities.

Soon, Brown and her partner bought the space, had a big four-day sale to empty the place, and went to work making her dream a reality. After a few months of

sweat equity and the help of some talented renovators, Perspective2 opened its doors in late September.

Brown says response has been great, and memberships in the collaborative space have begun to take off. “People have already asked for classes in lighting and how to use the Mac G5 editing tool and other gear,” she says.

Memberships in Perspective2 costs \$35 a month, which covers free studio hours every month in either studio, as well as discounts on additional studio time, equipment, prop rental, classes and events. It also provides photographers with access to professional, experienced staff who know what they’re doing when it comes to lighting, editing, and other elements of the space.

While it’s a great space for photographers and other creative collaborators – like designers, graphic artists, modeling agencies, makeup artists, and other talented folks – Perspective2 continues to offer other opportunities that Brown hadn’t dreamed of.

For example, Perspective2 is also launching into theatrical performances: the [Peppermint Creek Theatre Company](#) will have its entire season there, beginning with a two-week run of “I Am My Own Wife” in November.



“We’re inventing this space as we go,” laughs Brown.

Jack Helder works as a writer/producer in Lansing, and is a lover of Old Town, showing his Salukis and fly fishing.

[Dave Trumpie](#) is the managing photographer for Capital Gains. He is a freelance photographer and owner of [Trumpie Photography](#).

Photos:

Fashion photo shoot at P2 (photo-Lynne Brown)

studio B in Perspective2

Perspective2 facade

Owner Lynne Brown

Peppermint Creek Theatre Companies' set in studio A

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