



Big time in D.C.

25th 'painting with light' photo draws hundreds to the National Mall



At top, participants celebrate in the National Museum of the American Indian after the shoot. Above, volunteers aim their lights. More than 800 people turned out. (Photos by Rigoberto Perdomo)

Despite the relentless rain in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 26, more than 800 points of light shone brightly on the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian to make RIT's 25th Big Shot photograph.

A feature story about the project published that morning on the front page of the *Washington Post* "Style" section motivated families from the D.C. area to turn out. Armed with flashlights, they joined museum members and hundreds from the RIT community in illuminating the unique curvilinear architecture, texture and color of the museum.

The Big Shot process requires large numbers of volunteers to continuously paint the subject area with hand-held lights while RIT photographers make an extended exposure. Covered in garbage bags to shield themselves from the rain and perched on 15-foot scaf-



folding, RIT photographers Bill DuBois and Dawn Tower DuBois '83, '93 (biomedical photography, printing technology) took aim once RIT photography professor/Big Shot organizer Michael Peres '82, '91 (biomedical photography, instructional technology) placed the 10 lighting teams around the museum's perimeter, out of view of the cameras. The weather presented some challenges.

"The adrenalin was flowing and the issues before us were literally in our faces," says Bill DuBois, RIT chair of visual media and one of the Big Shot organizers. "The rain was much stronger than we anticipated. We had our cameras, tripods and computers protected from the elements as best we could, but one of our computers shut down because the mouse was too wet and a second computer also succumbed to the wetness."

Several volunteers from RIT and the museum served as models, taking stationary positions in the foreground to offer a sense of scale. Four images were shot. The third image was no good because a spectator appeared in a window of the museum. The fourth exposure, 20 seconds at f16, was the keeper.

The event drew in rookie volunteers such as RIT President Bill Destler and RIT Provost Jeremy Haefner as well as Big Shot veterans including Staffan Larsson, who traveled from

Sweden, and Kevin Sheldon '02 (management information systems). A resident of the area, Sheldon works in finance at AOL and is the leader of RIT's D.C. Alumni chapter.

"The photograph came out beautifully," says Sheldon, who has helped light six Big Shots. "It was another successful chapter in the history of the Big Shot. The events are always memorable and a lot of fun. It gave me a chance to catch up with friends from RIT. I think this Big Shot was unique because of the subject of the photograph and the reception afterward that celebrated Native American culture."

RIT's 25th Big Shot coincided with the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. As part of the post-shoot reception at the museum, Jason Younker (Coquille Indian Tribe), assistant to the provost for Native American relations and RIT assistant professor of anthropology, offered a Native American blessing. Two RIT students from the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences, Kyleen James (Passamaquoddy Indian Tribe) and Leah Shenandoah (Oneida Iroquois Wolf Clan) each presented the museum with a piece of their artwork. The program culminated with Shenandoah singing with her mother, Joanne Shenandoah, a Gram-

Top left and right: The scene before the Big Shot began. Bottom left: Bill and Dawn Tower Dubois man the cameras. Bottom center: Michael Peres directs the lighting teams. (Photos by Rigoberto Perdomo) Bottom right: The final version of the 25th Big Shot.

my-award winning singer, songwriter and performer.

Those connections helped make this Big Shot especially meaningful, says Destler.

"We are proud to be sharing our 25th Big Shot with this national landmark that is a cultural embassy to Native Americans everywhere."

Kelly Downs

Bring all the Big Shots home

Working with RIT's Open Publishing Lab, Big Shot organizers Bill DuBois, Dawn Tower DuBois and Michael Peres have produced a commemorative coffee table book. The full-color, landscape-format book features all 25 nighttime photographs and a series of essays from volunteers who've participated in numerous Big Shots. The book is available for purchase at www.rit.edu/bigshot.