Photographer, Filmmaker Henry Horenstein Turns to Kickstarter to Fund Latest Film

Henry Horenstein has worked on his latest film project — "Partners" — for more than three years, crisscrossing the country to capture the stories of a diverse mix of relationships, some conventional, some otherwise. To date every mile, every inch of film has been self-funded. And three-plus years of expenses add up.

How does an artist, even a well-established photographer, filmmaker, teacher and author like Horenstein pay the costs?

"Thanks Mr. and Mrs. Mastercard," he quips.

Now, with filming all but complete and facing the substantial editing and post-production costs essential to turn raw footage into a finished film, Horenstein has turned to the crowd sourcing website Kickstarter.

Horenstein set $35,000 as the project goal earlier this month. In just a few days, 64 backers pledged more than $12,000, a little more than one third the goal. However, Kickstarter projects are all-or-nothing. The project has to meet or exceed the goal for the pledges to be valid.

Kickstarter campaigns usually offer incentives to potential backers. A $20 pledge to "Partners" earns a digital download of the finished film. $40 backers get a T-shirt. Backers who pledge more receive signed copies of Horenstein's books, signed prints, a portfolio review or for $5,000, recognition as an executive producer in the film's credits and a listing on the Internet Movie Database website.

With project funding off to a good start, Horenstein is optimistic of repeating an earlier crowdsourcing success. His book, "Histories: Tales from the 70s," was funded with a Kickstarter campaign.

Kickstarter and similar crowdsourcing sites can be a boon for artists, Horenstein says. In addition to raising money, "It's a great way to connect with people," he says. "Plus you can get print sales and workshop opportunities from the visibility online."

One of the incentives available to backers

Just as important, the world has changed and it's a different economy for artists. Online art sales have multiplied, while some of the galleries which were the major venue for selling art have declined.

"You can choose to adjust to this bigger world, or not," he says.

Previous to crowdsourcing, artists like Horenstein depended largely on grants to fund their projects. He will continue to apply for grants, he says, but the potential financial resources available through crowdsourcing easily can be as substantial as most grants, or more so.

"Partners" is the latest addition to the large body of work Horenstein has built since the 1970s, comprised of photography text books, numerous monographs of his work and three films. Although he's photographed many different subjects, he always returns to his documentary roots, as in the current project.

"The film is about relationships," Horenstein says. "It's a simple idea, really. We got couples of various stripes in front of the camera to talk about how they met and how their relationships work. It's also a celebration of choice in our romantic relationships. If it's OK with them, it's OK with us," he adds.

As varied as the relationships are, "all the partners share so much in common," Horenstein says, "their tastes, their personal philosophies, their dreams. And most important, their love for each other. At its heart, 'Partners' is about acceptance. It's a celebration of choice."

The "Partners" Kickstarter campaign is open until Friday, November 3, 2017. For complete information on the film, please visit Kickstarter or www.horenstein.com.

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Mark Doyle
Director of Digital Imaging
E-mail: mark@autumncolor.com
Toll-free phone: 800-533-5050