



How My Passion for Travel and Collecting Became My Business

by Doveen Schecter

A fortune teller once looked at my palm and said, "Where are you going?"

"What do you mean?" I replied, assuming she meant metaphorically.

"You are traveling here and there and back and forth, and I've never seen someone travel so much in their early years." When I looked down at my palm, I could see she was right—lots and lots of little lines all joined together sealed my fate.

I was living in the States then, and now I'm back full circle to Hong Kong, the city of my birth. I'm an American living in Hong Kong, married to a German photographer, whom I met in Russia where I was working in marketing for an American company. I've been very fortunate to live all over the world, mostly as a child with my journalist parents and later in Thailand working with Cambodian refugees.

I started Dove of the East just over two years ago and have been running to catch up ever since as our products expand their France, traveling on without me to the United States, Canada, Ecuador, Columbia, Hungary, Netherlands, Australia and



A scrapbook layout featuring Palace Silk paper from Dove of the East's India Journey collection. Artist: Brandi Lung-Gill.

Dove of the East now carries over 120 products that have incorporated many of the bits and pieces I've collected in my travels. The China Journey, Russia Journey, India Journey and, most recently, Japan Journey collections include treasure boxes filled with amulets and charms, patterned 12" x 12" acid-free papers, brocade ribbons, metal and filigree embellishments as well as rub-ons and stickers. My parents, both writers and historians, took all five of us to every museum, cathedral and historical place of interest they could reach. My dad wrote for *Time* magazine for 18 years, as bureau chief and correspondent in Hong Kong, Japan and Russia.

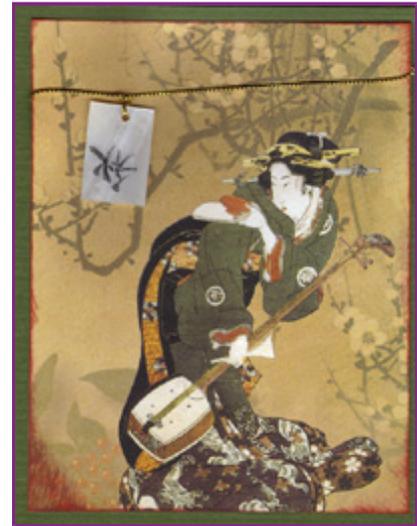
Always saying goodbye and adjusting to new places, I started collecting little bits of my nest since I was six and living in Japan, keeping them in my memory box (an old cigar box) and in journals. For years my friends and family teased me about all my bits of things and my collections of stuff, including jam labels, matchbox covers, shells, scraps of newspapers in different languages, porcelain shards from the beach and boxes from all the places I'd been. When I left New York to go work in Russia in the mid-1990s, my friends brought me to the airport, popped a bottle of champagne and sent me off with a reading of a poem they'd written called, "An Ode to Doveen's Stuff." They thought they'd had the last laugh as I boarded the plane with my canary and collections in tow. Now I'm having a wonderful time translating those obsessions into beautiful boxes that let me share my treasures with other creative people.



To China

So first came China Journey, representing the place I live now and the place where I was born and also the place where my 7-year-old son was born. I left Hong Kong when I was three but have come full circle to make it my home for the last nine years.

China Journey is a stamper's and scrapbooker's dream box with 29 amulets, charms and embellishments tucked into little organza bags in each of the six drawers. From the hand-carved jade amulets to the stampable shell tags (works well with Staz-On ink and Ranger alcohol inks), coins and dragonflies and more, there is something to spark the imagination of every person who opens the drawers and discovers it for themselves. I chose the characters on the front of the box because they have personal meaning to me and to everyone! Embrace, Family, Heart, Hope, Dream, Journey. For me the box feels magical, as if it belonged to an empress or a healing goddess, filled with healing charms, with magical and mysterious meanings. I love symbols and their power to mean so many different things to people over centuries and generations. From the strength of the bamboo on one side to the bird in spring to the dragons chasing the pearl of wisdom in a swirl of clouds, the box seems to have a power of its own and means different things to each person who owns it. I like that it can be a box for a man or a woman or even a 10-year-old girl. Since the box was launched I have met so many amazing people—stampers, scrappers and artists of all kinds—who have used the box and its contents to make their own creations.



This card was created by Brandi Lung-Gill with Shamisen paper from the Dove of the East Japan Journey collection and a shell tag from the China Journey collection.

On to Russia

The Russia Journey box is a fairytale and tzarist fantasy of old Russia. Much of the imagery on the box comes from my own collections. As a child I attended Russian public school in Moscow for two years, then went back several times. I later worked there for two years as an adult, met my husband and moved further eastward. Even though I went to school there under communism, I was very influenced by the fairytales and romance of pre-Soviet times. The box is a way for me to keep those memories long after I've made my home in the Far East.

We left Moscow for Hong Kong together, where, after a short corporate gig, I became a freelance writer for the last six years writing for banks and telecom companies. Eventually, through a local shop with American rubber stamps, I became obsessed with stamping and heat embossing and started to make invitations with small jade amulets and coins attached. Then on the Internet and through American girlfriends, I found scrapbooking. I researched everything online before I knew how to find my way to CHA. I went to trade shows in China and found a great printer and box maker and sourced all the charms, bags, even the handles myself. I wandered the markets and wholesalers and found things I loved. With the help of my husband and my parents, I was able to get started.



The background of this card by Brandi Lung-Gill features Floating World paper from the Japan Journey collection.

And so to India and Japan

The India papers incorporate romantic images of old India, including peacocks, goddesses, *mehndi* hands, painted elephants, princes and princesses, all from photos and bits of paper I collected on a trip there a few years ago. The latest collection, Japan Journey is very personal. The "Kimono Silk" paper design actually incorporates silk that was worn by my mother and grandmother. When my grandmother visited us in the 1960s in Tokyo, she and my mother shopped for antique *obi* fabrics, the wide belts of the kimono. They had them made into dresses, which they wore for years. I moved my mother's old dress around with me for many years, not knowing what I would do with it. Then my grandmother passed away this year at age 99 and her old dress was about to be discarded. I saved it and was able to use them both in the design!

I am always awed and amazed by the times we live in that allow us to make our home in Hong Kong, produce our own designs in China and see customers enjoy them and use them in the United States. I feel very lucky to be part of the great energy in China, working with young people who have studied English, who work hard and are ambitious about the future. I also feel lucky because Dove of the East allows me to keep coming to the States to the shows so that I can see my family and friends and make new friends all over the country!

There have been many lucky coincidences when others use Dove of the East designs to make their own journeys of discovery. By chance, many American families adopt children from China and Russia and have used the papers to scrap the life stories of their kids! I love what I'm doing and I hope the products will inspire others to use their imagination and creativity to express their own memories of the past and dreams of the future.

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Another card created by Brandi Lung-Gill with Shamisen paper from the Japan Journey collection.