



MARIANNE NAEREBOUT

A WORLD

OF DREAMS



Interview by Rosane Voskertchian with Marianne Naerebout.



ARTIST

Party Time, Lucky Love, Happy Few . . . titles that hint at the sort of dazzlingly upbeat work produced by the astonishingly talented Dutch artist Marianne Y. Naerebout. There is a universal appetite for Marianne's work with her paintings and sculptures snapped up by private, corporate and museum collectors and exhibitors in prestigious locations worldwide. This year, she made a considerable impact with her 'Follow Me' exhibitions at the Art Couture Gallery in Dubai www.artcoutureuae.com. Now she is back in the Middle East represented by entrepreneur Kristina Demenko (see p.69) who has organised ongoing exhibitions at the stylish Abu Dhabi and Dubai showrooms of fashionable Danish office interior design company Gemaco.



SO WHO IS THE WOMAN WHOSE BLAZING TALENT HAS CREATED SUCH EXCITEMENT? DAVID BLOCK CATCHES UP WITH MARIANNE NAEREBOUT AS SHE PREPARES FOR HER UPCOMING ABU DHABI AND TBA EXHIBITIONS.

The European Magazine: Is your colorful background responsible for the impact your work creates Marianne?

Marianne Naerebout: Could be. Soon after I was born in Rotterdam my family moved to Curacao where I spent the next five years. The spectacularly colourful Caribbean surroundings had a profound effect on me and gave me my early inspiration. That was fostered, but not tamed, when we moved back to Europe and I enrolled at the renowned Art Academy St Joost in Breda. Then I returned to colourful surroundings once again, this time on Cyprus where I studied at the island's College of Art . From then on I began developing my style in a wide and vivid variety of media ranging from simple to multiple techniques on linen, paper, silk screen, ceramics and wood objects. Then I began switching between oils and acrylics, and began creating works in explosions of colour with subtle lines that critics have described as ‘surging with positive undulating energy.’

TEM: So you’re not one to lock yourself away in a studio for long?

MN: That’s right. My inspiration comes from the influences of a life spent on four continents. For over a decade I lived and worked in the Middle East, the Far East and Africa. Then I spent a similarly inspiring period flying between the Netherlands and the USA, latterly adding Italy and Tanzania to my ‘artistic odysseys’. The experiences I accumulated during those decades continue to contribute to what I describe as my ‘inner world’, a limitless kaleidoscopic treasury that I now draw on intuitively.

TEM: What is it that inspires your work?

MN: I try to find the happiness that lies within all living creatures. So my creations are always happy: animals, birds and fish. Even happy trees growing beautifully. All with colours that radiate contagiously positive energy.

TEM: Is there a particular artistic style favoured in the Emirates?

MN: Not really. I lived in Oman from 1985 to 1988 and in those days it was a remote area with few outside cultural influences. But now there are so many different kinds of nationalities living here that tastes are very wide and eclectic. Until recently, you didn't see many local people at my kind of art shows, but they are beginning to come thanks to networking by gallery owners. I'd very pleased with that because the Middle East is becoming a very important region for me.

TEM: Let’s talk about creativity. Do you find your approach to work changes as you develop as an artist? For example, do you become more or less adventurous and is your creativity affected by your experience in life?

MN: It’s something I have really become aware of. That’s partly because I can now afford all the materials I need and can go for the best paints and other materials. So my mind is free to concentrate on what I see around me. When I started out I was busy soaking up all the environments, now when I go to the same places, I’m more detailed. I see old pieces of wood, stone or shells or even pieces of paper when I’m out walking and that constantly inspires my work..



TEM: For example?

MN: Well, you know what I found in Italy? An old shovel. It was ‘retired’ and had been discarded, but it still had an artistic purpose and I was able to create a pleasing artwork from it. People must find it strange see me walking along the beach pickup bits of driftwood. I say I’m beach shopping instead of Chanel shopping. It’s the same when I’m in the Italian mountains where I hunt for fallen twigs. I tend to notice these shapely discarded objects now but when I was young I didn’t have time to stop and look.

TEM: Your travel schedule must be pretty hectic.

MN: Far less so than during the decade up to 2007 when I travelled virtually non-stop. Now I divide my time mostly between our homes in Italy, Tanzania – where I have a studio near Mount Kilimanjaro - and occasionally the USA. We still have a place in Fort Lauderdale, Florida but I don’t work there so much..

TEM: How do those markets differ?

MN: The USA's a much different market from everywhere else and it’s very, very commercial. I don’t dare deal with it myself because it doesn’t make me feel very happy. In the USA you need to have people to do the business for you. It’s in complete contrast to Tanzania where I go just to work because it’s a pure and safe haven that enables me to do experimental work. Italy is a safe haven too because of my mountainous location among olive groves where I can also be quiet and peaceful. But if I want to shop, see friends or have meetings it’s only about 30 minutes from Monaco and an hour from Nice airport.

TEM: How do you keep up with the international demand for your work?

MN: I don’t have to worry about that. I’m a workaholic who adores what she does. When people ask me if I have any hobbies to help me relax, I say yes, I like to paint. And now I’m getting into other media, like silk-screen and acrylic sculptures - and last July I started producing limited editions in Plexiglass.

TEM: Any regrets about how your life has evolved?

MN: Now I know myself better. I’m aware of what gives me real satisfaction and what is just a waste of precious time. But to answer your question directly, what else would I have done? I could not move out of creativity. I’m actually getting a bit nervous, because I don’t want to do anything different. No way. I’m just happy with what I’m doing. And there’s still so much I still have to do with my art – and I pray please God don’t let me stop now!

TEM: Any remaining ambition?

MN: Oh yes, I would love to have an art school in the village where we live in Tanzania. I want to bring very good artists over to give the children art classes. I want the kids to take art seriously, not just something that fills in empty spaces in school hours. They have an incredible innate talent and it would be a tragic waste if it weren’t brought out. I’m always worried that when schools need to cut back art and culture are the first things that go out the window. Shame on such school systems. Even in the Netherlands I notice there is less and less time available for art classes. Shame, shame!

TEM: Still following your dreams?

MN: Certainly. And they’re in colour. One of my phrases is ‘how would a rainbow look in black and white? People can’t imagine how dreadful life would be without colour. As for my philosophy, it will always be “Believe in yourself - and never stop following your dreams.”





KRISTINA DEMENKO

THE MULTIFACETED ENTREPRENEUR

Kristina Demenko was born on an island on the south-east coast of Russia. At university she qualified in Business Economics then joined a multi-national oil company in Sakhalin, Russia. After three years, she went to Montreux to enrol in the renowned Swiss Hotel Management School. Cambridge was next to polish her English, pausing in Paris to learn French, before she was off again, this time to Dubai where she was recruited by Gemaco, the high end office furniture design company. In Dubai she was introduced to Marianne Y. Naerebout, saw her work and . . . "I was bowled over. It radiated excitement and energy and I was inspired to become her Middle East representative." Meanwhile, Marianne and I have become close friends which gives me even more incentive to spread the word here of her unique talent and individual brilliance." And with friends like the dedicated, multi-talented and widely knowledgeable Kristina Demenko, the picture is looking bright for their successful partnership.

Marianne Naerebout & Kristina Demenko ©Johan Witte