

123 Magazine

How did your artwork start out?

I always loved to draw. Very often, I was drawing satiric cartoons which were appreciated by my working mates. In 1989, after an unsuccessful experience learning saxophone, a friend told me he was doing art class in a small art place in Dendermonde, a suburb of Ghent in Belgium. I was living in Ghent at that time. So, I went by to see and I loved it. There, I learned the technic but very quickly, I wanted to do some other things than academic work. I was not interested in still life or portraits. I wanted to paint what was coming from my head. As I moved in Paris, I went to the Atelier des Beaux Arts de la Ville de Paris and register in a Free Expression group. There I started my first collection of work called Panic in the City.

What does art mean to you?

Art is everything, isn't it? We are nothing without art. All the time from the deepest ancient time, the man did art, in the caverns, in temples, churches, anywhere. Art is in my mind all the time. I'm fascinated by other artists, the way they figure out something, what they had in mind when they did it. Some people are surfing on Internet to have the news or the sport results, I am surfing to look what other artists are doing on Instagram or Facebook. I think I spend hours every day looking at other artists paintings.

How would you define your visual style?

I think I'm a colorist. The balance of colours is the primordial thing for me when creating a painting. I have my colours I love to use, the warm colours and the cold blues. I never use the black alone. If I use some black colour is just mixed with another colour to darken it. Since 2013, I am an abstract painter. Even if this what I wanted to do since the beginning, I needed to acquire enough maturity before to start it. Abstract painting is not just splashing paint anywhere on the canvas, you need to know what you are doing. What kind of feeling, you want to express, which balance of colours and forms. Very often people don't like abstract painting because they try to understand when there is nothing to understand, just have the feeling, feel the vibe.

What do you believe is the key element in creating art?

The key element is inspiration. Some artists are painting what they saw when doing a portrait or a landscape painting. I do what I have in my head. Ideas are coming all the time in my head. Very often they stay there as I have a better one coming after that. The other key element is passion. You must put all your passion in your work. People must have a feeling when they see your painting, it could be a disturbing one, but there must be a feeling. Without passion, there are only dull paintings and there is no art. I will add a touch of madness, but may be not all artists are feeling the same. It was necessary to have a touch of madness to start a 22 meters long polyptych as Colournoscopy.

How does creating art make you feel?

Very hard to explain to someone who never experienced it. Freedom. Being in another world, leaving well behind the existing world to enter in my own world. The one where nobody can interfere, only me and my painting. It is exalting, pure adrenaline. When I have a painting ready in my head, I have to go to my workshop. Sometimes I can't go there straight away, so, I'm very impatient and frustrated. Once I am there, I put the music loud and then I start.

Do you do anything in particular to seal your art?

I don't know the exact terms of the technique I use, I found it myself by experience. What I do, I put all the colours I want to use in my palette and I start with one colour and then I make gradient colours by mixing colours little by little to finish at the end with another colour. My way of saying it is I paint by messing up colours. I am very careful on the balance of colours and forms and also, the balance between light and darkness. In that sense, I would say, I'm not an instinctive painter as everything is mostly calculated. But Hans Hartung paintings were also very calculated.

Have you ever experienced "artist's block?" If so, what are some strategies you've used to overcome it?

No, not a complete one. I have so many ideas in my head. The blockage could be to be not completely happy of my idea. I need to do some sketches to find out what is wrong. Sometimes it takes time before I figure out what is wrong. So, that the kind of blockages I have. I do sketches, I redo sketches. I try to find out what is wrong. Why the balance is not right. Sometimes, other artists are the key

as I see what they did and give me a new idea. Sometimes I leave it for a while or for good, doing another work. I also show my sketch to another person to have a fresh point of view. Sometimes it helps.

What is your daily routine when working?

I don't really have a daily routine. But when I am working, time disappears. There is no notion of time except my regular need for coffee. It could be in the morning, in the evening, in the night or the whole day. If I have a work on-going, for sure if I can't go to the workshop because I have other things to do, this will be in my head for the entire day until I can go there.

Which artist of the past would you most like to meet?

Many of them, but in a quite recent past, I would love to meet Joan Mitchell and Jean Paul Riopelle. I am fascinated by Joan Mitchell work. It is for me the best abstract work I ever seen. To honour the death of Joan Mitchell, Jean Paul Riopelle did a huge polyptych of 44 meters long and this inspired me in my idea of Colournoscopy, my polyptych of only 22 meters long and 12 paintings but I had only to honour my passion to art.

But I would like also to meet other painters from the past such as Frida Khalo, Hans Hartung, Chagall, Magritte, Van Gogh, Gauguin... There are so many... And if you go further in the past, Rembrandt, Bruegel and Van Eyck.

What advice would you give to a young artist following in your steps?

Go for it. Don't be afraid and don't have any doubt of your capabilities. The only things which matters is the pleasure you have when you paint. But if you start, be your own. Don't try to imitate or to do things only to please the market, do your art because you love what you do. You will then be happy with the result as this has come out from your guts.