

ARTisSpectrum

Volume 32

The Chelsea Perspective



Going Solo

The Real and Imagined World
of Max Werner



Profiles of Contemporary Art and Artists

ARTisSpectrum

Publisher
Agora Gallery

Editor-in-Chief
Angela Di Bello

Assistant Editor
Sabrina Gilbertson

Art Director
Julie Wilson

Associate Editors
Karin Maraney
Joyce Asper

Editorial Assistant
Justine McCullough

Staff Writers
Steven Barnes
Natasha Brandstatter
Chloe Eichler
Alex Kecskes
Laura Monroe

Contributing Writers
James Chisholm
Angélique Droessaert
Lynn Hudson
Natalia I. Hughson, M.D.
Justine McCullough

Cover concept: Angela Di Bello
Cover design and feature article
layout: Keith Butler

ARTisSpectrum provides a forum for artists and art professionals. Articles express the opinion and knowledge of the authors and not necessarily that of the magazine's management. Artist profiles are written by staff writers or the artists unless otherwise noted.

© All copyrights are reserved by the authors. The copyrights of all published artwork are retained by the artists. Reproduction of any published material is prohibited without the written permission of the magazine's publisher.

Suggestions for future articles are welcome. Any topic submitted in writing by an artist, art professional or professionals in the service of the art community will be considered for publication.

Contents

- 6 About the Cover
- 7 Profile Directory
- 16 Going Solo: The Real and Imagined World of Max Werner
Angela Di Bello; Layout by Keith Butler
- 24 Spotlight on Young Ran Jung
Angela Di Bello
- 30 Studio Spaces
Biddy Hodgkinson
- 58 Looking for Renoir in the South of France
Angélique Droessaert
- 72 The Humanitarians
- 76 Unique Art Materials Add Layers of Meaning and a Sense of Place
Justine McCullough
- 86 The Healing Power of Art
- 100 South Central: Painting from the Bío Bío Region of Chile
- 104 Memorable Receptions from Around the World
- 109 Reunited
- 110 New York City: Evoking the Muse
- 116 ARTbeat

Printed by The CPC Group.com



Monsters at the Museum Acrylic on Canvas 69 x 46

Going Solo

The Real and Imagined World
of Max Werner

By Angela Di Bello

Since the year 2000 I have had the privilege of seeing some of the most exemplary contemporary art created and meeting many talented, gifted and passionate artists from all over the world. Artists of all levels have traveled near and far only to find themselves in the center stage on the most vibrant and relevant art community in the entire world, New York City.

continued...



*Top: Deer Creek Pass Acrylic on Canvas 40.5 x 50
Below: Lava Rocks Formation Acrylic on Canvas 29.5 x 41.5*

Never before in the history of this great city has there been such an influx and demand for art and new ideas that contemporary and emerging artists bring to the forefront of the art scene. The shift has been revolutionary. There was a time when the art world was open to only a select, privileged few who made it through the portal of a closed art community. Since 1984, and in part because of what Agora stands for – “open market place” – artists of all levels have an opportunity to present their works without the extreme level of censorship that was once prevalent amongst the art elite. Art, after all, is about the expression of new ideas, although warranting of evaluation must be considered; otherwise, how will new ideas ever be introduced if the opportunity to present them does not exist? Agora’s platform allows for this evaluation and thoughtful consideration.

As a result, at Agora, artists of all levels of artistic expression have the ability to, at minimum, present their works for consideration and observation by eyes that recognize talent and provide opportunities for exposure and development. An artist can choose from numerous levels of promotion based on their previous level of achievement and for most artists, collective exhibitions suit this need perfectly. However, it is no secret in the art world that for those artists who are more accomplished and established with a large body of work, a solo exhibition is the best way

to present artworks. Solo exhibitions provide additional exposure and benefit not only the artist, but art buyers as well. For artists, displaying the full breadth of their collection is important in that it allows the gallery curatorial flexibility and the thread of consistency that speaks to the relevancy of the collection, resulting in knowledge and greater understanding of the artwork and the artist. Art buyers and collectors have the advantage of gaining greater insight, as well as being able to monitor the direction of the more extensive body of work over a period of time. This does not, however, diminish the relevancy of a smaller body of work; simply put, solo exhibitions allow for a fuller body of work with up to thirty or more pieces of art as opposed to four, six or nine pieces.



One such highly accomplished artist who has availed himself the opportunity of solo exhibitions, not only at Agora Gallery but also at venues in other parts of the world

is **Max Werner**, who is featured on the cover of this issue of ARTisSpectrum Magazine and had a solo show at Agora Gallery, Beyond the Horizon, from May 16 – June 5, 2014. Max was born in Ghent, Belgium, where days are short and light is sparse. His education took him to the French part of the country after which he traveled to London where he studied at the Byam Shaw School of Art and to the Slade School of Art where he would eventually teach etching at



*Worshipper of
Anubis Print on
Paper 10 x 6*



Desert Police Station Acrylic on Canvas 25 x 35

both schools. Max has traveled throughout Europe and extensively throughout Scotland and South America; he lived for five years in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and eventually settled down in Massachusetts in the United States. While in the US, his passion for horseback riding in the Western part of this great country took hold. All of his travels contributed to a greater understanding of the landscape and his love of space and light.

To many, Max is classified as a realist; however, there is such a strong enigmatic element overshadowing his magnificently executed landscapes. The overshadowing might be as a result of the fact that Max is not an en plein air painter; rather, he will oftentimes create sketches and take photos during his passion sport, horseback riding, on, for instance, the trail in the mountainous open plains of Argentina, and consistently throughout the West in the US. He will turn and churn memories and experiences along with sketches until weeks later, in his studio, he begins to recall the intense emotion of that wide open landscape. Max loves the reflective observation, whether sitting in a pub sketching people or on the trail. His love of surrealism gives his work an edge that one might not see in the works of a realist painter. Max's paintings allow us the experience of peeking inside the mind of an accomplished painter whose under-

standing of light, space and juxtaposition of form is critical to the creation of works that are a slight step away from realism. As we all know, most of life is surreal because of the part that memory plays in our lives. Nothing can ever truly be remembered as it was first experienced; what we remember is filtered through time and reflection over and over again until the illusive memory becomes yet another reality. That fine line is what we experience in Werner's paintings.

Recently I had the pleasure of taking another peek into the real and imagined world of this talented painter.

AD: Max, tell me about your early family life and who and what may have inspired you.

MW: I grew up in a family immersed in fine art. My grandfather on my mother's side was an avid art collector, very erudite, and had an infallible eye. On my father's side, same thing, but there were also very good artists in the family. In particular my two greatgreat uncles, who were painters of considerable talent, and in their days (1880s, 90s) were quite successful.



Racing the Storm Acrylic on Canvas 43.5 x 56

So as a child I grew up in a house full of paintings. My grandmother's house (on my father's side) in particular had some amazing portraits of ancestors who looked sternly down on me. I grew to love those dark portraits, which I later discovered were very much in the old Flemish/Dutch tradition. It is probably why to this day, Rembrandt is my alltime favorite painter.

My other grandmother (I never knew my grandfathers. One died before I was born, and the other when I was 3) also had a house with paintings everywhere, but fewer portraits. As a little boy I remember spending hours in front of a Hieronymus Bosch, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*.

There was also a Bruegel called *The Bad Shepherd*, representing a fleeing shepherd while a wolf was attacking and killing his sheep. So from an early age my head was filled with images that simply never left me. That Bruegel, for instance, has a simple but perfect composition which I have used in many paintings.

AD: That is fascinating, it is no wonder then that you developed such an affinity for the visual experience. Tell me about the Ghent where you were born, how did this environment influence you?

MW: Ghent where I was born was and still is a town that looks like one of those represented in the paintings of the Flemish Old Masters. Like Bruges, where my ancestors come from. Those two towns have some beautiful old museums to which my father brought me from an early age. All that left an indelible impression on me, and is, I think, still reflected in the approach of my work.

AD: It sounds like a very rich environment for a child to grow up in, where did your love of horses come from?

MW: My mother, who grew up in Argentina, had a passion for horses, and spent a lot of her early childhood galloping around with the gauchos rounding up cattle in one of her uncle's ranches over there. When I was 5 or 6 she put me on a horse, and it became a natural thing for me and my sisters to be around horses. I was also, as a child, fascinated by the Wild West cowboys stories, and oddly enough, since I was living in Belgium, country and western music. I went to boarding school from the age of 11 to 18, and during that period of time the Wild West fascination faded a bit, but was rekindled after my first trip to the USA when I was 20. I think it was a trip that actually changed my life, because on my return I decided I couldn't live in Belgium anymore and should move to London, which I did a couple of years later.

AD: Well that certainly explains your love of not only horses but the West as well. Tell me about your earliest recollection of drawings and how your interest developed.

MW: As you may know, Hergé is a cult figure in Belgium, and his importance there shouldn't be underestimated. Everybody of my generation grew up with Tintin, even though he was created in the 1930s. I think he is a tremendous artist on at least 2 fronts: literary, and pictorially. I read the Tintin stories as a child, as a teenager and as an adult, and they work each time! As a teenager I discovered the humour, as an adult the complexity of the plots and the thorough research put in each story, but then as an artist... wow, the guy is a genius. First his drawings of the human form are worthy of the best artists I can think of, and I am thinking of Leonardo and Michelangelo. If you look at his sketches, they are incredible! The composition of some of the images in his cartoons are sometimes so bold and inventive. His clair obscurs remind me of Magritte, and I could go on. Suffice to say that as an artist his influence is, for me, as strong today as it has ever been.

AD: I now realize how Hergé influenced your appreciation for humor and irony, which often are prevalent in your paintings. What led to your discovery of etching?

MW: Well there is a story there as well. So, for a while, since I loved drawing, I thought I should go to art school to study cartoons, which I did briefly in Brussels, until I realised it wasn't quite for me and moved to London.

In London the art schools were so different from anything I knew that at first I was a bit disoriented, and although it is there that I discovered etching, the first couple of years I studied painting mainly. But I always liked black and white, and so naturally gravitated toward the etching studio.

In my third year I met the Portuguese artist Bartolomeu dos Santos, head of the printmaking department at the Slade. I loved his work, and his etching technique was unique. He passed this on to me, and I worked on etchings for 15 years until I moved to Argentina, where the colours and the light were so vibrant that I thought I couldn't do it justice in black and white. It is there that my passion for horses flared up again and I started painting them. But what really inspired me there were the landscapes. The huge skies and vast horizons were reminiscent of those Western landscapes I had seen in the US 20 years before.

So when crisis hit in 2001 it was natural I should move to the US where I was working already with a gallery in Princeton. I started traveling West, looking for the vast landscapes that had filled my childhood imagination, and that I had glimpsed during my first trip in the US in 1978.

In 2003 I got a commission for the Household Cavalry, Queen Elizabeth II's regiment. That commission forced me to really study the anatomy of the horse, and afterwards made me much more confident handling the subject. Hence the present pictures, which contain more horses.

That leaves out all the pictures that have nothing to do with landscapes. Those are straight out of my imagination, and as explained on my website, are the fruit of observation, dreams, and various other ideas that pop up in my head, but fed by people like Hergé, Magritte, Breugel, and Bosch.

AD: I understand that you did not have your beginnings as a painter, tell me about your early works.

MW: For fifteen years I mainly worked on etchings. For many years now, my favorite medium is acrylic on canvas and although I use a wide range of ideas which at first might seem

very different from each other, the common thread is that each painting or etching tells a story.

AD: What is the inspiration for your ideas?

MW: The ideas I use are often triggered by simple observation of my immediate environment, such as the landscapes, for instance. They are not painted on the spot, but instead painted in my studio. Sometimes I introduce elements not there at the time but which caught my attention at a later stage. I may also decide to introduce figures that were not there at the time. The end result is often an image which evokes more than a landscape, and invites viewers to reflect.



Early Morning Round Up Acrylic on Canvas 24 x 38

In conclusion: The otherworldly aspect of Max Werner's paintings reflects worlds known and unknown to us for the very reason that a painting is a reflection of the mind, imagination and soul of the creator. A work of art is a privilege to view and an experience shared by the artist out of generosity and the desire to reveal one's depth of identity beyond the superficial day to day face that we present to the outside world. A work of art is, in fact, a visual poem. ▀



The Blue Painting Acrylic on Canvas 47.5 x 45.5