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Marise Maas

THROUGH HER observations of everyday life, Marise Maas attempts to uncover a bigger story.

Like many other artists, I depict whatever has grabbed my attention the most. The situations and things that jump out for me are the common and mundane details in life. I've always been reluctant to intellectualise too much or make large theoretical statements.

Often I get bored or irritated when artists get too analytical about their work. When explanations are laborious and taken too far, the work itself can become too rigid. Even though I'm unwilling to analyse too much, I do believe art can be useful for opening up much-needed dialogue about huge issues. In my paintings I deal with snippets of the everyday. I'm attentive to things that may seem unimportant. Through this observation of the ordinary, I've noticed that larger stories hide within the banal details anyway – small but big.

Along with the common things, horses are also featured quite a lot. I often use horses instead of people to illustrate the situation. This way I keep it anonymous, leaving the people out. Using horses probably stems back to the great love I've had for them since childhood. A horse was the first thing

I ever drew. So again and again it appears. As a child in The Netherlands I rode horses in this precise dressage manner. We moved to Tasmania when I was 13 and due to more space I got to own a horse. In the magnificent nature I learned how to ride in a much wilder style. The memories are good, evoking the freedom it gave me at the time. The last 20 years or more I've lived in cities and I hardly ever ride a horse these days. So it's all rather sentimental.

All the paintings are started without too much of a plan. I like this part the most because it's as close to meditation as I ever get. It's an instinctive start where I forget myself for a little while. Dead, but alive... in a good way. After these beautiful moments of freedom I'll stand back and look at it to decide what I can read into it. I resolve the painting in a more rigorous manner, getting rather stern about colour and how the space must be used. Knowing when to stop becomes important too. Having many canvases on the go at the same time prevents overworking.

There are many artists that inspire me greatly: Luc Tuymans, Susan Rothenberg, Cy Twombly, Giorgio Morandi, Paul Klee, Francesco Clemente, Noel McKenna, Richard Lewer and so many more. It's not easy to know which ones to mention, like

books. Like Jean Dubuffet, Karel Appel and many others, I've also had a long-term fascination with the art of children and the insane. It's the directness of perception. It's very easy to be jealous of that easy intuition and immediate mark making. I spent a lot of time untraining myself in order to get closer to spontaneity.

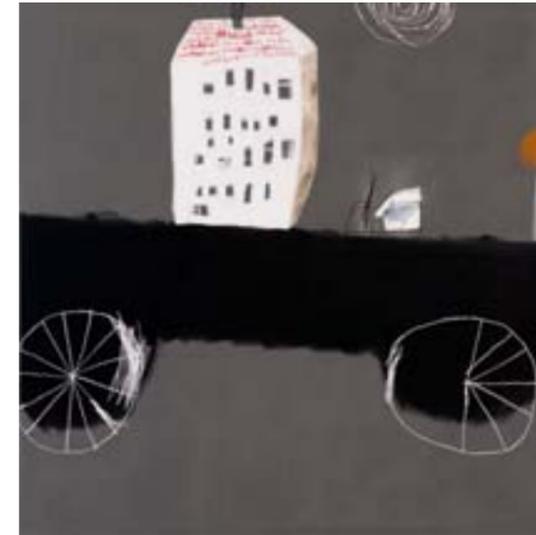
I paint a lot and feel fortunate to be able to do that. It can be a bit of a mindtwist because no direction is ever given and sometimes you take yourself too seriously in the process. I also get slightly embarrassed at times because it's a self-absorbed profession. But it blows my mind how much there is to see and so many different ways of looking. This has always made me want to put it down on something, there's just too much. Subconsciously I must have always been attracted to painting. I like being alone a lot and painting provides the solitude. ■

Marise Maas is represented by MICK, Sydney, and Flinders Land Gallery, Melbourne
www.mickthegallery.com
www.flg.com.au

EXHIBITION
Small but Big
27 Feb to 1 Apr 2012
MICK, Sydney

01 Choke & Don't Mingle, 2011, oil on canvas, 80 x 80cm
02 The Move, 2011, oil on canvas, 130 x 130cm
03 Raise A Roof, 2012, oil on canvas, 130 x 130cm

Images courtesy the artist and MICK, Sydney.



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