

INTERVIEW – MARISE MAAS



The Only Good One by Marise Maas, 2011, oil on canvas, 160cm x 160cm



How To by Marise Maas, 2011, oil on canvas, 75cm x 100cm

Marise Maas is a Melbourne-based artist whose beautiful paintings explore what she calls the ‘remarkable mundane’. Her work takes inspiration from ordinary and everyday things, because as she says below, ‘if you look closely at the smaller detail, you find bigger stories’.

I love the feeling of childlike wonder and naivete in Marise’s work. Her line drawings are so simple and restrained, yet are rich with symbolism and subliminal meaning, which stem from Marise’s unique ‘accidental-on-purpose’ approach to image composition! Marise begins each new work in a very meditative way, not analysing or thinking too much, and ends with a more conscious focus on the arrangement of visual elements in each work.

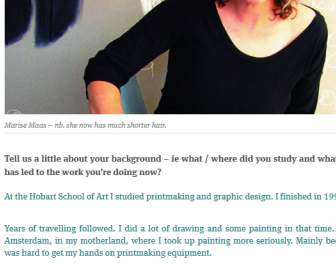
Marise is originally Dutch, but moved to Australia in 1982 and studied printmaking at the Hobart School of Art. Her work is highly collectable and has been acquired by many major collections including the National Gallery of Australia. In addition to maintaining her prolific creative output, Marise is also a busy Mum, and lives in Altona with her musician partner and two young boys.

Marise currently has an incredible solo exhibition at [Flinders Lane Gallery](#), which opened just last week! Many of the works you see here are part of the show... you can view them all [online](#), but if you’re in Melbourne do pop down to see the work in person! (You could even buy one! – and if you do, I would like to come and photograph your house please).

[Marise Maas - New Paintings](#)
11th – 29th October 2011

Flinder Lane Gallery
137 Flinders Lane
Melbourne

Gallery Hours
Tuesday – Friday 11.00am – 6.00pm
Saturday 11.00am – 4.00pm.



Marise Maas – nb, she now has much shorter hair.

Tell us a little about your background – ie what / where did you study and what career path has led to the work you’re doing now?

At the Hobart School of Art I studied printmaking and graphic design. I finished in 1991.

Years of travelling followed. I did a lot of drawing and some painting in that time. But it was in Amsterdam, in my motherland, where I took up painting more seriously. Mainly because it often was hard to get my hands on printmaking equipment.

I was poor. So in the house I lived, I dismantled the old ceiling boards and started to paint on them. I ended up exhibiting those ceiling boards and continued to paint on anything I could get my hands on.

The initial years of painting were supported by many dodgy jobs.
But the beautiful thing is that the last 10 years I’ve been able to paint full time.

How would you describe your work (if asked by someone who has never seen your paintings?)

Figurative but not very realistic.
My paintings deal with the ordinary and the everyday.

Like many other artists, I’ll paint whatever has come to my attention. But it’s exploring the remarkable mundane that fascinates me most.

I like to make the ‘unimportant’ important, because if you look closely at the smaller detail, you find bigger stories.

What can we expect to see at the current show at Flinders Lane Gallery?

My continued long term interest in the ordinary.
I keep glorifying the banal.

The horses are not featured so much in the current exhibition.

Many artists and independent creatives who love their work still struggle with the solitary nature of working alone every day. Does working solo work for you, or do you crave feedback / social interaction with other creatives occasionally?

The solitude very much suits me, I think subconsciously I was attracted to this profession because I love being alone. I’ve never been a painter who likes people popping into the studio whilst I’m working. The solitude is a luxury, but I’m aware that it’s not healthy to shut yourself out totally.

Without observation of the world and interaction with others, it’s hard for any development in the work to take place. You can’t just be answering your own questions. I also believe everyone craves feedback at times.

I do like social interaction and sometimes like to party too much... But to me there’s a big need to keep it separate from the beautiful lonely studio time.

Can you give us a little insight into your process? How do you begin a new work – do you have a clear idea of how it will look before you start? I’ve read you have many paintings on the go at any given time, why is that?

Yes I do have many paintings on the go at any given time. The main reason for this is to avoid overworking. Knowing when to stop is very important to me and that’s easier when there are a lot of other half finished paintings around.

I also like to have many canvases on the go to avoid becoming too precious, it allows for more spontaneous mark making. I use a canvas almost like a sketch book. I like to leave in the mistakes because they may become the best part of the painting. You can not plan for that.

Before I work I usually walk, like a fight for headspace. Boredom and sadness are to be taken note of too. Walking before painting provides a little optimism but also clears the head to a state of emptiness easier to start from. Without the nothingness, it’s hard to come up with anything.

I start every painting in a meditative manner, not analyzing or thinking too much. This is when you forget yourself and experience a moment of freedom.

I resolve the painting in a much less meditative state. That’s when the balance or aesthetic arrangement starts – I’ll stand back and read what I want into it.

Which other artists, designers or creative people do you admire?

There are many people who give me great feelings of inspiration. A few to mention are Luc Tuymans, Francesco Clemente, Carol Rama, Susan Rothenberg, Noel McKenna, Richard Lewer, George Baldessin, Cy Twombly.

I also deeply admire people who build things: houses, boats or sculptures.

Plus without good musicians my world would lack a lot of insight.

Can you list for us your current top 5 go-to resources across any media for creative inspiration?

Contemporary novels, Raw Art magazines, domestic object or car manuals, cookbooks and sometimes I look at [ffffound.com](#) as an (IFOUND!) app on the phone – it shows a bit too much graphic design but also wonderful image surprises.

What does a typical day involve for you?

At 8 am it’s breakfast and getting the kids (we have 2 sons) off to school.

I’m slow in the morning but very alert at night. So before anything else happens I have a few coffees and read the paper, do some domestic chores etc. Then I’ll walk and when I return I go straight to the studio. I have to be careful not to start cooking or gardening because beginning can be a bit hard.

My most productive painting hours are from 4pm until about 11 pm. If I didn’t have children I’d still be going to bed at 3 am like the good old days.

There’s a lot more to juggle these days. I’ve had to learn a lot about time management.

Luckily my partner often works evening hours, he is a musician, so there is some flexibility.

What would be your dream creative project?

To make paintings that are 10 metres long and 3 metres high. I would love to be taping my brushes on broom handles and paint standing back.
Of course I’d need a huge studio to accomodate this dream – preferable with ocean views!

If I had the money.... to build a studio like that myself would be a dream creative project in itself.

What are you looking forward to ?

Continued health and happiness and also every new canvas.

MELBOURNE QUESTIONS

What’s your favourite Melbourne neighbourhood and why?

The beauty of Melbourne is that different suburbs are very likeable, each with their own reasons.

Having lived in Fitzroy, St Kilda, Elwood, Footscray and Altona, I think I must admit that any suburb near the bay is favourable. It’s the calming effect of water and the breeze that comes off it.

Which is your favourite bookshop in Melbourne for reference material and general browsing?

Now that I live in the wild west, I use [The Sun Bookshop](#) on Ballarat Street in Yarraville the most.

In the city, [Metropolis Bookshop](#) in Curtin House on Swanston Street is very good for browsing and or buying.

What and where was the last great meal you ate in Melbourne?

A simple brunch meal at [The Cornershop](#) in Yarraville, just before a movie at the Sun Theatre across the road. It was mashed avocado on sour dough with Swiss Chard and ruby grapefruit salad.

Where would we find you on a typical Saturday morning?

In bed with the weekend papers or in the backyard.

Melbourne’s best kept secret?

Altona – long beach, long pier, long horizon line.

Needs some good small bars though.....