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creative room talk

An international magazine for communication & creativity

Malti Bhojwani

3 most important things for people to work on in order to change perspective to unleash untapped creativity

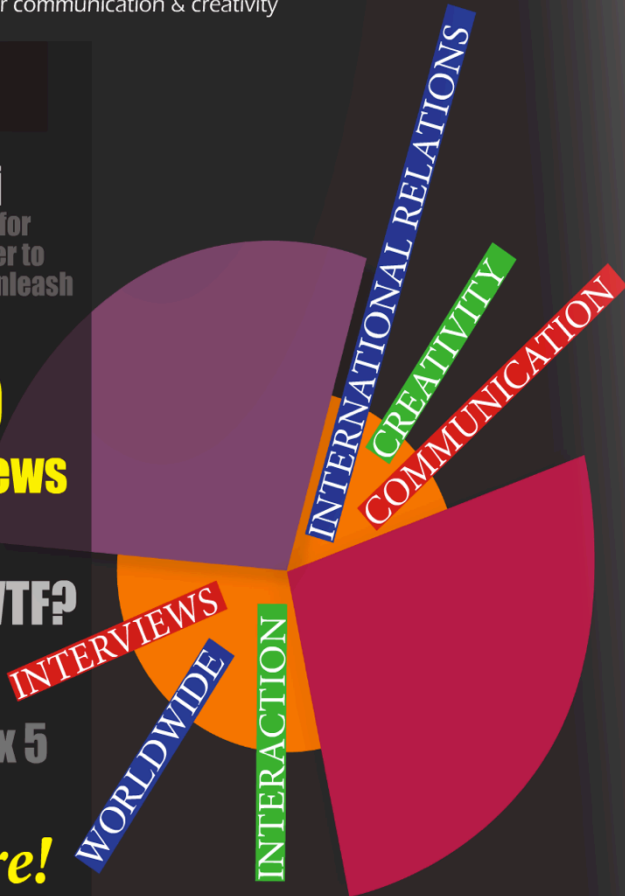
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MARCH 2016

Interview:

Laurence de Valmy



Laurence de Valmy

G.S. Photography

Name: Laurence de Valmy

Where do you live:

I was born in Africa, was raised in France and England, and spent most of my adult life in France or the USA. My husband and I moved 3 years ago from Paris to the USA, in the New York area.

Known for:

I am a Contemporary Realist painter and my work is often seen as photorealist, which led me to be featured in www.photorealism.org. I love both of these movements and the border between the two can be subtle.

I am convinced that light and colors influence our mood. Therefore I choose to paint colorful and bright paintings to create happy and peaceful moments in time.

Currently working on:

"Art does not reproduce the visible, rather it makes visible". This quote of Paul Klee resonates strongly for me. I am working on projects that explore the visibility of images that delight both my eye and my mind. I paint about who I am and what I like, what makes me feel happy: views of magic places like Paris, reflections of the sunlight on the surface of the water, colorful objects that surround us and even some fashion.

When did you realize that you were going to work with this/in this area?

I started to paint when I was 10 or so. When it was time to choose some academic

studies, I followed a more "secure" path and completed a Master's Degree in Economics. I had the chance in 2003 to take a year off, and I spent it in the USA. That was a turning point for me for different reasons: for one thing, I moved from abstract to contemporary realism, and found the style that matches best with me. I also started to show my work and had some buyers making offers for it. I continued my career while still pursuing my passion for painting, with the idea that one day, I would be able to fully transition to a career in art.

If you could choose one place only to live, where would that be and why?

I have lived or visited many different countries and I feel very lucky to have had these different experiences. Therefore I would be quite sad to think I'd have only one place to live! However one place where I would be very happy to live is near Los Angeles: it has a great climate and is near the ocean, it has real cultural diversity, a dynamic art scene, and foodies.

How would you describe your creativity?

Creativity is putting your imagination to work so you have to be in that state of mind. Some days I'm in an execution mood and some days, ideas just keep coming in. One idea leads to another and after a brainstorming I select the ideas I like the most. So I would say that in the first step, my creativity is intuitive. I follow my feelings. Then I try to rationalize them. I'm a mix of

Aries and Capricorn! ;-)

How and when did you start to work with this in a serious manner?

Since I started to paint as a young adult, I was always serious about it in the sense that I wanted to learn and progress. I tried many other types of art forms in a less serious manner, more as hobbies. I've always been more self-demanding with my painting. I was lucky enough to have access to major museums and see art up close, which taught me a lot. When I was curious how an artist had created something, I tried to do it myself. Of course at first I was not sure I could actually make a living as an artist but it has been a long-standing objective.

What do you do at the moment?

I am currently working on the preparation of two shows taking place in the spring, one in NYC and one in New Jersey. When I'm not in my studio, I enjoy doing some networking. It's great to meet new people and exchange ideas.

A recommendation for those who think about starting and running a creative business?

First, it's always good to be creative in any kind of business! Also, I've come to realize that a creative business faces the same challenges as any other business: identify who can be your buyers, how to get to them, stay focused, choose your priorities... What is very exciting nowadays is how social media makes it possible to reach peo-

ple all over the world. I have discussed and met people from the art world that I would not have met 15 years ago. It does not mean that it makes it easy but it's a great tool in our hands to expand the number of opportunities and accelerate how things can happen.

Tell us how it all started.

I made my first steps through my personal network. Some friends asked me if they could buy from me. I also got commissions. Then I took part in some auctions at the famous Richelieu Drouot in Paris. More recently I joined the online Gallery Saatchi art, which is great to reach international collectors.

What is the most important thing in a workplace/studio for you?

Having a window to look outside and good light. Space is good too of course and then a cup of tea!

What is your favorite film?

I've had the chance to be exposed to movies both from Europe and the US, and I love movies, so it's very hard to pick only one! Instead, I will pick the French movie director and Oscar winner Claude Lelouch for his rich and complex characters, and Woody Allen for his witty and funny dialogues. The other type of movies that I love, are the Hollywood movies from the 50s, with a special tenderness for musicals with Gene Kelly or Fred Astaire. It's glamorous and elegant, and watching them is like eating

something sweet and refreshing.

Who would you like to invite for a dinner and why?

Hosting dinners is something my husband and I love to do. We cook together and share a nice meal with friends. I'd love to host an international dinner with a mix of artists whose personalities and work I admire. For example, the American painter Janet Fish, the Kenyan actress Lupita N'yong'o, the French high fashion designer Christian Lacroix.... There are of course many more on my list!

How do you like to spoil yourself?

I believe that happiness is the sum of many happy moments. So depending on the timing and the mood, it can be travelling or simply going out with my family, reading a good book, buying some art supplies, eating a chocolate, buying some fashion jewelry.

What is luxury for you?

It's to be able to live without the fear of tomorrow.

What is the nicest compliment you've received for your creative work, and from whom?

Compliments are always nice but it's also good to receive all kinds of feedback, since it's not always easy to take a step back from your own work. So I value both compliments and critics. In the end, the best reward ever is to have collectors who like my

work enough to have it in their home, and I feel fortunate to have several examples where that has occurred.

What do you fear most?

I think first of anything that could hurt my family obviously, but in a more general way, I fear extremists of all kinds. They are the opposite of what I value: freedom of expression, democracy, tolerance, diversity, culture and peace. You cannot have a rational discussion with extremists, and what scares me is how easily they manage to influence and manipulate other people.

What is a happy life to you?

Being able to have a healthy family, living in a safe and pleasant place, and on top of that being able to do what I love. I am very thankful for what I have today.

What does a regular day look like for you?

Weekdays are organized like for any working person, between my family life and my work. I usually catch up with emails and social media in the morning, especially with contacts from Europe, before getting in my studio. The evenings are spent with my family and on average once per week to some social events I have the chance to attend. Weekends are very social between dinners we host or parties we attend.

Tell us about your dream project.

I'd like to take my sons and husband to Kenya. I've been there twice and it's magical to witness the wild life. It's beautiful, raw,

and it's the perfect place to understand the fragile balance between animals and humans.

The other dream I have, would be to have some originals of art of some painters I love. It's so moving to know that a person that you admire has created it. I see it like a link with the soul of that person.

Who is your professional role model/inspiration?

I admire people who are both talented persons and great human beings. Audrey Hepburn for example was both an actress and humanitarian. I have these two images of her in my mind: starring in *Breakfast at Tiffany*, and then also seeing her in real life, surrounded by African kids. Bill Gates with his foundation supports many causes and has achieved concrete results; for example, with a new way to purify water. I find these persons inspiring because they give back.

How would you describe your work style (academic field or fashion style, or both, or something entirely different)?

My work style is contemporary realism that I have discovered thanks to Janet Fish. Along others, she managed to modernize the still life approach. Her work on everyday life objects and reflections has inspired me a lot.

For the fashion style, I love Dior for its feminine and dream dresses and Chanel for its more feminist approach to fashion. Coco

Chanel was a quite unpleasant lady, but to her credit, she created clothes thinking more about women than seducing men.

Which is the one thing you can't live without?

Love of course!

What inspires you?

Being a visual artist, my work starts often with images: things around me, photos I see. I keep my eyes open and I trust that anything can become a piece of art. Sometimes some ideas come just before falling asleep. My children who are both very creative each with their own personality also inspire me.

A book that has changed/made the most impression in your life?

I love books. Going to the library or a bookstore, is like a treat! It's a concrete example of what is best in human nature: knowledge, culture and diversity.

If I had to name some which are close to my heart, it would be "The Ladies Paradise" from Emile Zola and the works from Jane Austen, with "Pride and Prejudice" at the top of the pile. Zola and Austen wrote about very different universe but both were realist novelists and manage to create great stories from simple people. They had a razor sharp eye to describe human beings.

Check out Laurence's awesome [website](#)