BEAUTY in Paradox

DUTCH ARTIST HADASSAH EMMERICH EXPLORES CONFLICTING EMOTIONS AND CONCEPTS IN HER BODY OF WORK

The world of arts has evolved over time. They are no longer defined merely for their beauty, but also for their meaning. Art has become a medium for artists to express their opinions in many aspects of life. This is how Hadassah Emmerich, a female Dutch painter, views her artworks.

Hadassah (b.1974) was born in the Netherlands with a mixed heritage of Dutch, Indonesian, Chinese, and German. She was raised in a working-class family, where her grandfather used to work as a miner. Her life background and the struggle that she went through as a mixed heritage woman made her ponder on many things in life. Hence, allowing her to create artworks that encapsulate her thoughts on identity, eroticism, exoticism, and self-reflection, particularly involving multiculturalism.

Her artworks invite her audience to delve deeper into the complexity and exquisiteness of her mind by creating a paradox within them. This paradox was inspired by her contradictory feeling of oppression and liberation; the desire of wanting to break free from her past life condition as a working-class individual as well as chasing the freedom to create things that are larger than life. Most of her works display the images of the female body creating the paradox of simultaneous attraction and repulsion, intimacy and cool detachment, resulting in some of her works to be considered as truly provocative.

She studied arts in the Academy of Fine Arts in Maastricht in 1993-1997, where she later had the opportunity to become a guest lecturer in many universities, including in her alma mater. She continued her studies in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp and earned a Master degree in Fine Arts at Goldsmiths College London in 2005.

Emmerich always challenges her artistic skills to continuously grow. Since 2016, she has used an unconventional painting technique to create her artworks; using stencils cut from vinyl flooring, which she later covers with ink, then impresses onto canvas, paper, or a wall. The sensuality of her painting is emphasised more with her refined use of colour and technical execution; she loves to use strong colours to create a bold visual language to communicate a rarely brought up yet so evident issue in the society. Emmerich says, "I support the idea of an 'inclusive' art practice that is able to communicate on different levels."

Throughout her career as an artist, she had done 11 solo exhibitions, excluding group exhibitions, catalogues, residencies, and other various works. Her works have been displayed internationally such as in the Netherlands, United States, Indonesia, and Germany. Additionally, her works have been featured in many galleries and museums including Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Schunck Heerlen, Hendershot Gallery in New York, and Stedelijk museum.

She has done various works including a collaboration for the Netherlands government. In 2018 for instance, she was asked to create a large-scale mural commission at the Netherlands Embassy in Jakarta where different artworks were showcased for different floors in the Embassy. Hadassah successfully integrated the concept of batik motif with her artworks style on the commission, as batik represents the cultural icon of Indonesia. She is currently invited as one of the 17 participants of the Trailblazers exhibition in the Royal Palace held by His Majesty the King and Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix, curated by Miriam Westen and Richard Kofi.

Each artist was given a room in the Royal Palace where they were expected to display artworks that can communicate with the building; to respond to the architecture, the interior, the history, and the function of this important palace for the country. As the name suggests, the artists are considered 'trailblazers'; people who interrogate, stretch, disrupt, and reconstruct the boundaries of painting. This exhibition was open to the public at the price of 10 Euro until October 3rd, 2021.

Emmerich's work that was exhibited in the Trailblazers exhibition is called The Inverted Table. In this artwork, she uses a wooden structure to hold together 5 canvases with 7-meters long painting and a vitrine that is used to put personal belongings, such as postcards, jewelry photos, drawings, and small objects. This vitrine depicts how the artwork holds personal memory and meaning to its viewers. She created a paradox just like her other artworks by inviting the audience to look out into the world (the painting) whilst looking within (the vitrine) at the same time. Thus inviting the audience to look both externally and internally.

As one of the artists at ISA Art and Design, she participated in a successful ISA Art & Design Exhibition, Buah Tangan, back in 2020 together with other well-known artists, Adam Deboer, Ida Lawrence, Ines Katamso, and Sinta Tantra.

For more information about her works and other ISA Art and Design shows, please visit www.isaartanddesign.com.

1. Hadassah Emmerich's work, The Inverted Table in the Trailblazers exhibition
2. Hadassah Emmerich with Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands
3. Mural Commission at the Netherlands Embassy Jakarta
4. Bodyscape IV, 2019, oil on linen, 125 x 75