



"Wake," 2007. Acrylic, ink, watercolor, charcoal and linocut on paper, 110 x 110 cm (photo: Peter Rosemann)

Crossing Cultures

by Chiara Argentini

Filters, Glow, Fish & Flowers, Special Import, Wake – these are a few of the seemingly straightforward titles that Hadassah Emmerich gave to her latest works on paper. In *Wake*, dense layers of exotic flowers and plants bound by sinuous vines dominate the entire pictorial space. On the left, a large plaque depicts the archetype of a beautiful South Seas woman. Placed throughout the lush vegetation are medallions with the repeated image of the exotic beauty. The woman's face, with her almond eyes and sensual mouth, recalls far Eastern shadow puppets, as well as alluring travel advertisements.

Hadassah Emmerich's lush pictorial language and colors ensnare the viewer, conjuring up fantasies of far-off paradisiacal lands, images of Hawaiian girls in grass skirts, Paul Gauguin paintings, tattooed arms, pin-up girls or Carmen Miranda and her fruit-laden hats. The damp breeze from the primeval forest, the heat of the tropics, and the strange, indefinable noises of wild animals are palpable.

These forceful works, grouped together under the theme "Exoticism," are thought out to the smallest detail, each color and line deliberately placed – they appear to be stories without beginning and without end, like jungle paths that the viewer willingly takes, leading him into strange lands.

The artist's cultural background plays a decisive role. Born in 1974 in Heerlen, the Netherlands, she is of Dutch, Indonesian, Chinese, and German descent. Her background is a source of endless images, colors, aromas, memories, feelings, and ideas.

Emmerich's personal history was the starting point for her artistic activity and the inspiration for the Exoticism series. Her current interest is focused on the complexity of this notion and of how to represent it. Emmerich's concept involves an association of references to art history, popular culture, daily life and the authentic signature of the artist.



Hadassah Emmerich is represented by:
 Galerie Akinci, Amsterdam www.akinci.nl
 Galerie Elisabeth Kaufmann, Zurich. www.elisabethkaufmann.com
 Official website of Hadassah Emmerich: www.hadassahemmerich.com

Exhibition view "Casino Exotique." Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 2008 (photo: David Brandt for Künstlerhaus Bethanien)



"Highlights," 2008.
 Acrylic, ink, watercolor, spray paint and linocut on paper, 137 x 203 cm
 (photo: Peter Rosemann)

A unique visual language

Emmerich achieves this through the use of various artistic techniques, employing ink, watercolor, chalk and acrylic lacquer on linoleum cuts. Murals – sometimes covering entire rooms of her exhibitions – as well as installations are part of her repertoire. Emmerich not only takes inspiration from Asian art in the Exoticism series, but also refers to Western art. She is especially interested in early works on paper and

illuminated manuscripts, where graphic, painterly and narrative elements exist side by side in the same pictorial space. Emmerich was encouraged to do murals after visiting Baroque churches in the south of Europe, and her wall paintings somehow recall the walls of these churches, interspersed with dark pictures. As with illuminated manuscripts, it was the association of different styles and symbols that inspired her.

Works on paper, murals and installations mutually complement one another, yet each retains the character of an individual work. The most recent example of this was the exhibition *Casino Exotique* at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, in which Emmerich presented some new works (an exhibition catalogue is available).

Emmerich unites modern myths of the exotic including quotes from literature, with now-obsolete idealized notions on the subject, with irony but also a critical eye: in short, a blend of the expressive and the intellectual.