

VISUAL ART

and why I love it so much



Frans Swarte

"Middelburg"

I must put my love for visual art down to the drip-drip effect to which I was exposed at college, and being part of a family where my father and oldest brother were competent and confident sketchers. My father, a fashion buyer, sketched to record his collections, and my brother did it just for fun. Unfortunately, I did not inherit those talents.

On my way to school in Den Hague, I passed the Mauritshuis Art Gallery, home of some of the best of Dutch painting, including 'The Girl with the Pearl Earring'. And our curriculum included at least three annual visits to museums, plus theatre and commercial companies. So we were loaded into buses and transported to the Rijksmuseum, the Phillips Museum, Rotterdam Harbour and other important historical and cultural venues.

Along with our own Dutch painters, we were introduced to Italian, French and German artists. But it was Alfred Sisley that I liked best. Hence my interest in Impressionism which has lasted to this day.

Having valiantly done my National Service for queen and country in the army, I had the chance to do an apprenticeship at a supplier of cloth to Haute Couture and Prêt a Porter in Paris. This cemented my love of form, colour and composition. Since then I have always worked with textiles and through this my interest in visual art has grown stronger over time.

I had a passing flirtation with photography over the years but it was an on-off affair until 2008 when I took it up more seriously. Around this time, enormous developments in photo enhancing software were made which were very hard to resist.

It has been said that, to begin with, painters and artists were pretty much convinced that photography would put them out of work. Luckily that did not happen and the two exist happily together. It is certainly not uncommon for painters to take photographs and use the image to paint at leisure in their studio. Neither is it uncommon for photographers to turn photos into painted-looking pictures.

Of course purists may not agree with either. I have had some criticism from fellow photographers but to me, if the possibility exists, there should not be any restrictions. After all, the darkroom was created to produce and manipulate images. And painters have been influenced by new trends and ideas - in the last 60 years or so we have had Minimal, Abstract, Pop, Conceptual and Post Modernism art. So why should photographers be held back? I start with an idea and often it comes to nothing, even after quite a bit of work. This, no doubt, is a familiar experience for all of us. In the end, it comes simply down to just one question - do I like it? And if I do, then the world is a wonderful place.

From time to time I offer work for photographic exhibitions. Sometimes nothing is accepted and other times, to my surprise, it is - it's pot luck. The image above was accepted in such far away places as Bali, Filderstadt and Oklahoma. And I just read that \$300M was paid for an abstract painting by Willem de Kooning - probably the most expensive painting in the universe. There is hope for us yet!