

PAINTER SPOTLIGHT

Arantzazu Martinez: Dream Chaser

By Wim Van Aalst

Art is a matter of pure passion for the Spanish painter Arantzazu Martinez. When her craving to paint like the 19th century masters could not be met at the academy in Madrid, she left Spain to study at Jacob Collins's Water Street Atelier in New York.

"It was like a new world opened for me," Martinez remembers. "Suddenly everything was possible: I learned to draw, learned to paint, learned about color, I learned everything there."

When she got back in Spain, Martinez began painting commissioned portraits, to pay the bills. "After about six months, I was completely depressed. I don't want to wake up to this."

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Arantzazu Martinez

"I didn't hate it—it simply was not giving me anything. I need my work to make me exalt," she said. "After learning how to paint, the process, the technique, I had finally gained the freedom and the ability to do what I wanted! Yet I found myself doing something that I really didn't care about. It felt like I was letting myself down. Why in the world would I do something that I don't feel is worth it when I spent all my guilders and life to learn what I longed to do? It was a complete shock to me."

Martinez sobered up and quickly returned to her original interest.

"You must have a great idea, and make it more perfect, bolder. If you feel excited about it, that excitement, when you love it, when it's gonna be great, it gives you the energy to keep going. You get a little bit obsessed—without any suffering. Then you can go deeper and deeper until what you have is perfect. But if you work on something that you don't care about in your heart, it's not worth to go that far. You need to really fall in love with something to make it great—without that love, there's no way to take it beyond the ordinary."

With her focus in place, Martinez's compositions have gradually been growing in size and complexity, with

some of her amazing work now measuring over 7 feet tall.

"I'm trying to push myself further every time, while trying to keep things interesting and fun for myself," Martinez said.

The fun begins before painting.

"I do spend a lot of time on the designing stage," Martinez said. "Selecting the props, composing and building the scene. If you don't settle for less and delve deeper to find what you really want, you will always find a way."

The process of her latest bigger work, "Absolute Trust" ("I'm looking for that also in my life," she said.), was an interesting one: "It's about feeling confident that everything is going to be alright. As I was painting, the painting told me about what trust really means."

She recounts finding the throne, which the painting required: "I accidentally saw it in the window of an antiques shop. What are the odds of running into a throne in one's life? Really, it starts with a dream and becomes a reality."

Then what does it take to dream? Martinez said:

"In the end it is a choice. If you get close to the things that make you feel sad, sad because of this, sad because of that, or because of what happened here or elsewhere, or because of yourself, it's a choice. If you choose to look for the things that you feel better about, that too, is a choice. I would say: help yourself."

Martinez's cascading words burst with passion as she speaks of the source of her inspiration.

"When it comes to the different art forms ... I believe there is a connection between all of them, they give you that high emotion; they make you feel bigger, give you more clarity, make you feel more able to move, give you confidence. I'm inspired by the idea of human strength; that feeling you get when you follow your dreams; the ability to create something that doesn't exist, not only in a book, or a painting, or a sculpture—but even in life, every single day that you wake up in the morning. That feeling that makes you feel really, really, good; it's about strength, clarity, love, a deep calm, fun. ... So my inspiration is many, many things together."

Martinez would love her paintings to have the "ability to color people's lives, that it shows people the way to that emotion, to that dream. When you are close to art that makes you feel in a different, better world, that's beautiful. It is beautiful because it is refreshing, it is arresting, exciting and great. That's what I'm looking for."

Wim Van Aalst is a painter based in Belgium



"Absolute Trust: Sleeping Beauty," 2014, by Arantzazu Martinez. Oil on linen, 90 by 51 inches.

Accepting Entries: 2014/2015 International Art Renewal Center Salon

By Kara Lysandra Ross

The Art Renewal Center, a nonprofit educational foundation dedicated to the renewal of traditional training techniques in the visual arts is currently accepting entries for its 11th annual competition. Artists have a deadline of Jan. 15, 2015, to submit their entries. Winners will be announced in the spring.

The first international ARC Salon occurred in 2004, and since then the number of entries and the quality of work submitted has increased dramatically; no doubt due to the growing interest and appreciation in contemporary paintings utilizing realism and traditional painting techniques.

For the first time, ARC has teamed up with Rehs Contemporary Galleries Inc., New York. The gallery will select a group of approximately 15 finalists who will be asked to supply the gallery with additional images. From those finalists, the gallery will choose four to six artists for a group show to be held at its gallery on 57th Street either late 2015 or early 2016.

For the first time ARC will be having a live exhibition of some of the winners and finalists at the MEAM (Museum of European Art Modern), a museum dedicated to con-

temporary realism in Barcelona, Spain. However, artists may still enter the ARC Salon with works not available for the live show.

Also, Streamline Art Video will award one finalist a showcase as a key featured part of a DVD on the ARC Salon.

The ARC Salon recognizes seven categories: figurative, imaginative realism, landscape, still life, drawing, animals, and sculpture. The winners will receive over \$60,000 in cash prizes, as well as a chance to have their work seen by some of the more than 5 million annual visitors to the ARC website.

The ARC Salon will also have press coverage in at least six magazines and two newspapers; Fine Art Connoisseur Magazine will be publishing an article on the top winners of the 2014-2015 ARC Salon as well as selecting a finalist for a featured article. In addition, Plein Air Magazine, American Art Collector Magazine, Western Art Collector Magazine, American Fine Art Magazine, and International Artist Magazine will all be giving out awards.

This year Brandon Kralik will be writing an article on the 2014/2015 ARC Salon for the Huffington Post and an article on the top winners will appear in the Epoch Times.

Last year the ARC Salon received over 2,200 entries from 1,000 realist artists around the world and this year it is anticipating an even greater number of entries.

To read the prospectus and for more information about the competition, see: tiny.cc/ARCSalon

Kara Lysandra Ross is the chief operating officer of the Art Renewal Center.



"Amelie" by Thomas Reis. Oil on Canvas, 12 by 19 inches. ARC Salon Best in Show 2011/2012.

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