

## About Jolanda Richter

Interview by Deanna Piowaty, USA, May 26, 2013. *(shortened)*

*Jolanda Richter's paintings are not easy. There are no subtle hues to soak in, no soothing brook to dip our toes. There is struggle here, yearning. Sometimes her subjects are swimming up to ceilings and out windows, other times free-fall tumbling. The hardest of all is when no movement is possible - the surrounding walls so close we can feel chests tightening. The fighting for air. And yet ... We cannot look away. We stay. And struggle with her.*

*Who initially inspired you to start exploring art and music as a girl? Do you come from an artistic family?*

Everyone played an instrument in my family but not as professional musicians. So to study music was my first choice because we didn't have any painters in the family or friends as role models. But drawing was my favorite form of expression since childhood, even more than speaking. I preferred studying art encyclopedias for hours instead of playing with other children. Looking at paintings was more important to me than anything else, a world in which I found shelter. This was entirely naturally to me, a matter of course. And so I never stopped drawing.

*Do you experience similar emotional rewards from painting? Do you hear music when you paint?*

When I am standing in front of a painting from an old master in a museum this painting is not just an object but a vivid storytelling world which provides a vision into the painter. For me art is a special kind of language. I always hear music when I am painting (a special piece for every painting) - and I see pictures in my imagination while listening to music.

*When I gaze at your paintings, I perceive much yearning coming from your female subjects, much tension between them and their surroundings. There is a sense that they are trying desperately to get somewhere but that in many instances they encounter obstacles that hold them back. Is this an accurate perception?*

Yes! The best short description I have ever heard. My compliments! While my paintings are a part of myself, completely and authentically, I am reflecting of course our society with their hopes, fears and problems. In particular, my female subjects are a mirror of the position of women in our time and society! Psychology is the key for decoding my artwork, because I deal a lot with psychological subjects. The ideas for my paintings develop from a complex inner process. Involving psychology, philosophy, literature, and the various media are influences that come to resonate with my inner world.

*What do you hope your viewers will experience when they look at your pieces? Do you have one that is a particular favorite?*

When I present my work the viewer is asked to reflect on his or her own emotions, thus conceptual and perceptual are both up to the audience. For me there is no difference between these aspects. The viewer has to search his or her innermost feelings in order to understand. My particular favourite piece is always the one I am painting at the moment.

*Have you ever been surprised with a viewer's interpretation or reaction?*

Of course! When I started to exhibit I couldn't handle some surprising reactions very well. But later I understood that to get extreme reactions, from positive to negative, is an important quality characteristic.

*Who are some of your greatest influences?*

Caravaggio, Alfons Mucha, Franz von Stuck, Jacek Malczewski, Jean Delville, Fernand Khnopff, August Rodin, Camille Claudel, Giovanni Segantini, Anders Zorn and most symbolist artists.

*What stories or themes are you carrying with you now that you hope to explore next?*

I am in a permanent process of developing my main theme. You have to figure this out more as a creative flow than a intellectual decision. There are many ideas I develop but when it comes to work out something I let myself guide by my intuition.