

MARITIEM KUNSTENAAR

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With a detour Marco Käller came back to his two great passions: painting and boats. To his own surprise he became successful to such an extent that his paintings now provide him with a living. This is a visit to a satisfied person.

My father was a skilful artist, an advertisement illustrator with a marketing consultancy agency. Nowadays he would have called himself a graphic designer. Illustrating has thus always been present in my life. I went to the Art Academy, chose the liberal direction and ended up in education. As an arts and crafts teacher, I felt as if I was the permanent straggler of the class. The students went to the next grade at each end of the year and I remained behind. I thought that was dreadful. Besides my job as a teacher I designed theatre sets. Eventually I stop building the sets for the youth theatre because I felt it was time for something different. I began focusing myself more on presentations and on building stands. It was not long before I began receiving assignments to make arts objects for the corporate world. At that time, I started building a house and took some time off from school to think. In the evenings and at night I painted since I was too embarrassed to paint during the day since painting could not provide me with an adequate living. I have always sailed, in the past in dinghies and the nautical element could always be recognised in my work, including my theatre productions. The boats cautiously revealed themselves in my abstract paintings. People already recognised something maritime in them, when I did not know yet. The moment that I had made approximately fifteen of them, I held an exhibition and sold an incredible amount in one weekend. Since then, I do paint during the day! This all happened six years ago and soon the following question arose: what kind of boat would I buy? I had always sailed on rivers, my wife on seas and together we had a dinghy. Afterwards we bought an Optimist for the children and I paddled along in a canoe to give them instructions. We soon fell in love with a classic, wooden Swedish Neptune; an open boat with a tiny cabin, just bigger than a Dragon. It was beautifully renovated. We enjoyed sailing in it, but it soon became too small. If you want a classic with space, it often ends up being really big. Again we fell for a classic boat, but a lack of time and space caused for another change of boat. Now we have a Beneteau First 32.5, The Colourful. I painted the spinnaker and the stern with a personal logo.

I get my energy from sailing a lot and I also work when I am on board. I always carry materials with me. Not oil paint, but acryl and of course not my biggest canvases. With my family we sail as tourists, but with my friends I go to competitions and events. Nothing special or of high level, we just do our best. By competing I was introduced to the organisation of the 24-hours, for whom I made a silk-screen print. The image was put on their website and those interested could be hyperlinked to me. A silk-screen print is not very cheap, about 200 Euros. It is a labour intensive technique, but that makes it a fine present. A lot of crew members, for example, gave it to their captain after participating in the 24-hours.



WATERKAMPIOEN



I currently display my work at four maritime fairs: Düsseldorf, Hamburg (Germany) and the Hiswa's (The Netherlands). At first I found it extremely embarrassing; as an artist you don't show your work at a boat fair. When I got the opportunity to display my work on a friend's stand, I change my attitude. Even though we were in the wrong hall surrounded by the wrong boats, I lost part of my embarrassment. I'm not going to do this, I am not going to sell my paintings at a fair, but maybe it is not such a bad idea after all. Such was the changing course of my thoughts. It was not done. An artist is supposed to be in a gallery with whispering visitors drinking a glass of wine. I have to add that it helped that the Germans had an art pavilion at Boat Düsseldorf. Afterwards I took the step towards the Hiswa. I was advised to go to the Hiswa on Water because it generally draws a large crowd that is interested in paintings, but both fairs appear to be suc-

cessful for me. At first I found it incredibly boring, but now I look forward to it, it is actually quite a lot of fun. I have gotten to know a lot more people, I still meet new people and I maintain my contacts. Actually it is like having my own personal gallery. I try to make contact with potential customers and then I can go back to painting. Beside this, there is only one gallery where my work is sold. In Germany it is more common to manage your work yourself. Besides, I have high criteria standards for a gallery so the way things are at the moment is working out for me. I am developing myself artistically which is very important for an artist. I started rather abstractly because I was afraid to show too much of the boats. For some reason, I found maritime subjects not suitable for serious art. You don't do that, painting boats. Gradually my work became more figurative. I find it interesting to show more of the sails and the body of the

boat and then to conceal that again. I was always a lagoon-sailor, but now I sail more on open water and I realise that you can paint a boat without actually seeing it. At sea, a boat is often partially under water or behind the top of a wave. I have a lot more sailing experience now and that can be seen in my work. For instance, why do I hardly ever paint flat bottoms? Because I have never sailed on them, I don't feel familiar with them as an item. However, I am planning to explore the subject more in-depth. If you examine the silk-screen print of the 24-hours, you see that one boat sails on the wind. Someone unknown to sailing is unable to paint such a picture. You can only capture the essence of sailing by experiencing it yourself. A lot of painters don't experience their objects, they just remain spectators. I am on the starting-line myself. En route I take many photographs that I reconstruct at home in order to make the start of a composition. No, in my work you hardly find any people. I find that people make my work static, they become dolls and one does not miss them when they are not there. Are you also a member of the Association of Sea-painters?

No.
Why not? How do you feel about that association?
I am not the occupation association type. I do not have a judgement about the sea-painters. Actually, I would like to say one thing. I find maritime art often very traditional; it could be a bit more modern. There are a lot of self-educated people in the business and for them it is often difficult to give direction to their development. That is a big difference with an educated artist.

Do you ever make something that you like so much that you don't want to sell it?
No. I enjoy being able to live off my work and that entails that I have to sell it. It is crazy, but I hardly have any of my work left, it is all sold. They'll find their way. To be able to paint, I need peace and quite and painting is then what I do as a last step. First I have to work through all my lists, the tasks have to be done. Only then can I fully concentrate and work hard for a couple of days. The rough structure is often finished in a day. It is a lot of physical work. I know when a piece is finished. To create distance I often hold it upside down to see if the composition is still correct. For variation I make portraits of ships. I like to do that a lot and it gives me the feeling that I am a skilled artist.

