

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT



Deventer from Across the IJssel

Caroline Navarro's exhibition in Holland

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Caroline Navarro was brought up in Malta, but her art studies and career took her away from our shores. She has exhibited extensively and has demonstrated a thematic preference for urban landscapes and seascapes, which she is also well known for.

Her current exhibition in the Dutch town of Gouda explores her fascination with the urban fabric and the vernacular architecture of Gouda itself and other Dutch towns.

Navarro uses an expressionist palette that relates to that of Oskar Kokoschka – one in which contours flow, colours explode and emotions swirl. The architecture is released from its static prison while rivers and bodies of water are energised through brushwork that is intense and forceful, yet very poetic. Navarro excels in portraying the beauty of life as she experiences it.

She admits that she also admires the work of Theodore Gericault as well as that of Vincent van Gogh, Raoul Dufy, Emil Nolde and the tortured work of Edvard Munch. Except for Dufy, all these artists embraced and celebrated in different manners mankind's discomfort with vulnerable existence and its scant micro-



The Windmills on Kralingse Plas

scopic importance in the great scheme of the natural world.

However, Navarro, who can be defined as a neo-expressionist, refrains from tackling anthropocentric material. She focuses on architecture and its interaction with and encroachment on natural environments.

Essentially, her painterly perspective is one of admiration towards human endeavour but which, however, she seems to prefer to keep at a safe distance. Navarro's *plein air* approach embellishes her paintings with an honest immediacy and a freshness.

No human presence pollutes her urban landscapes and this imbues the narratives with a timeless charm. The desolate quality of her paintings is a positive one, originating from an empathy towards these conglomerations of dwellings known as towns, and not from a dystopian dislike of humanity.

Navarro chromatically expresses the joy that arises when the natural symbiotically co-exists with the manmade. One can

be casually reminded of Maurice Utrillo's Parisian cityscapes, most of which are similarly bereft of any human presence.

The Windmills on Kralingse Plas demonstrates sublimely Navarro's admiration for Kokoschka in the cohesion of the individual elements towards a homogenous composition. The black lines add a Max Beckmann drama to the perspective. The luscious vegetation in the foreground frames the aquatic narrative of the piece, which eventually gives way to the two windmills dominating the composition.

The artist successfully portrays the symbiotic co-existence of the human with the natural and shows how man's enterprise doesn't always entail his self-destruction. Navarro eloquently shows us that, at times, human endeavour can actually complement and embellish nature.

In *Turfmarkt No 88*, the artist attempts to get closer to the actual architectural fabric of the town. The dominating building that rises above its counter-



Turfmarkt No. 88

parts across the street is not claustrophobic and domineering. The shop window adds visual interest and focus, and seems to reflect the body of water in its glass.

The windows and doors of the houses in *Deventer from Across the IJssel* are like singing chasms or agonising orifices, like those found in the paintings of Chaim Soutine. There is a strange beauty in the choir of buildings wedged between river and sky, and in the tenuous

ghostly bridge crossing the body of water.

This collection of six paintings that Navarro is exhibiting in Gouda sing with expressionist fervour. It is the language of a mature artist in love with the environment that surrounds her.

The exhibition will be open until February 28, 2021, at Jackie's Gallery & Goldsmith on Lange Groenendaal in the historic centre of Gouda in the Netherlands.