



Press release Miami Art Fair '92

The Dutch artist Marjon de Jong (Amsterdam, 1947), successful in her country, just presented her Japanese ink paintings at Miami Art Fair '92. Not being Japanese at all, the Japanese themselves are amazed by the Japanese soul she lays into her paintings. After having visited Japan in former years for deepening the Sumi-e art form, as it is named, she nowadays receives many acclaims due to her skills and discipline.

At home, as well as abroad, particularly in Japan, she has many collectors. Readings as collaborations with artists and designers made her name. Still, in spite of her success, this disciplined artist realizes herself that everything she achieved can be taken from her in one single moment and this is the attitude in which every new work is made.

Marjon de Jong about Sumi-e: "Ink painting must be like a thing alive with the power to stir the hearts and emotions of all who see it. The spirit of Zen lies in Sumi-e, for in Sumi-e as in Zen, nothing is wasted and the world is expressed in a language reduced to the farthest, most essential limits. Free your mind of ambition or desire, 'become as nothing'. Then your paintings will sparkle with life. The problem is not 'how to paint beautifully', but rather 'how to be awakened through painting'. What an artist has to say and how an artist refines his or her own statement, is largely a matter of self-awareness. Sumi-e teaches self-awareness in that the discipline of Sumi-e requires one to unify various elements of the self during the act of painting. There must be physical control, emotion and spiritual concentration present at the moment of creation if a painting is to have substance. A lapse in any aspect is indelibly recorded. In Sumi-e there is no erasure, only starting over again and again until the right combination of elements is achieved. The artist should not overpaint or add superfluous strokes. In the absence of extraneous strokes, each line becomes important and must be carefully weighed.

A Sumi-e artist must master a carefully organized series of brush strokes. Just as important as mastery of technique is the ability to mentally create the spirit of the object one wishes to paint before any strokes are executed. This visualization is the necessary first step in capturing the essence of what one sees. Applying Sumi (ink) to the paper is actually the final step, for it is not possible to alter the results once ink has touched the paper.

Careful composition, combined with a minimum of brush strokes yields the total effect of economy and simplicity. The hallmark of Sumi-e, as well as the source of its quiet beauty, these can be obtained only through assiduous mental discipline, mastery of fundamental techniques and sensitivity to the interplay between painted and unpainted space.”

What attracts Marjon de Jong so much in the expression of Sumi-e is the simple beauty. The essential nature of a thing can be condensed in a few abbreviated strokes and the spontaneous feeling of the painter can be expressed through the subtle tonal variations produced by the brush. The white areas have a profound meaning for they give the painting a sense of spatial depth, they produce a sense of elegance and refinement, they perfect the idealistic concept and they introduce vitality into the painting. Sumi-e may in fact be called ‘the art of white blankness’.

true lines are the extension of true thought
true thought is actually ‘no thought’
and the lines are the work of no mind

We wish you a very inspiring time meeting this artist and working with her in the coming workshops.