

Tourbillon



THE SWISS MAGAZINE FOR WATCHES, PEOPLE AND LIFESTYLE



ART & TIME

Caroline
Dechamby



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Caroline Dechamby opens up her Maison d'Art to us at No. 1 Rue du Prado in Crans-Montana in the Valais region. The ultra-contemporary, large-format and colourful pop art-style paintings are testament to the artist's creativity. Watch dials with miniature versions of her oil paintings and her own silhouette demonstrate a further dimension of her art.



*Questions: Karl Heinz Nuber,
Photos: Jean Daniel Lorieux,
Marc Gysin*

You are a self-taught painter and were born in the Dutch city of Utrecht. How was your childhood?

I had a happy childhood. My mother was an artist, my father an architect. I had never dreamed of becoming a painter myself but the call to do so was more than I could resist. With their extraordinary, intense lifestyle, my parents gave me a taste for the finer things in life and for aesthetics. I learned to observe, contemplate and admire things. My environment enhanced my passion for the arts.

How did the ensuing years progress?

In Paris I garnered praise as a highly-renowned photographer's model. Later I took up painting quite naturally.

In 1995 I moved to Crans-Montana, where I opened my first gallery in 1998 then my Maison d'Art in the heart of the Tourist Centre in 2006. This place fills me with peace and tranquillity. I found my own image and my identity here.

Why did you end your successful modelling career and what was the trigger for painting?

I began painting while still working as a model in Paris. Many things are just an illusion in the fashion world, and I wanted more.

There was a major change in my life when my daughter became seriously ill. My whole outlook changed and painting allowed me to create a more optimistic, happier world around me.

I don't regret my modelling years, because they enabled me to see the whole world and understand where I belong. Today I can use all the experiences I gained in Paris.

How have you developed your unique style and what was the idea behind it?

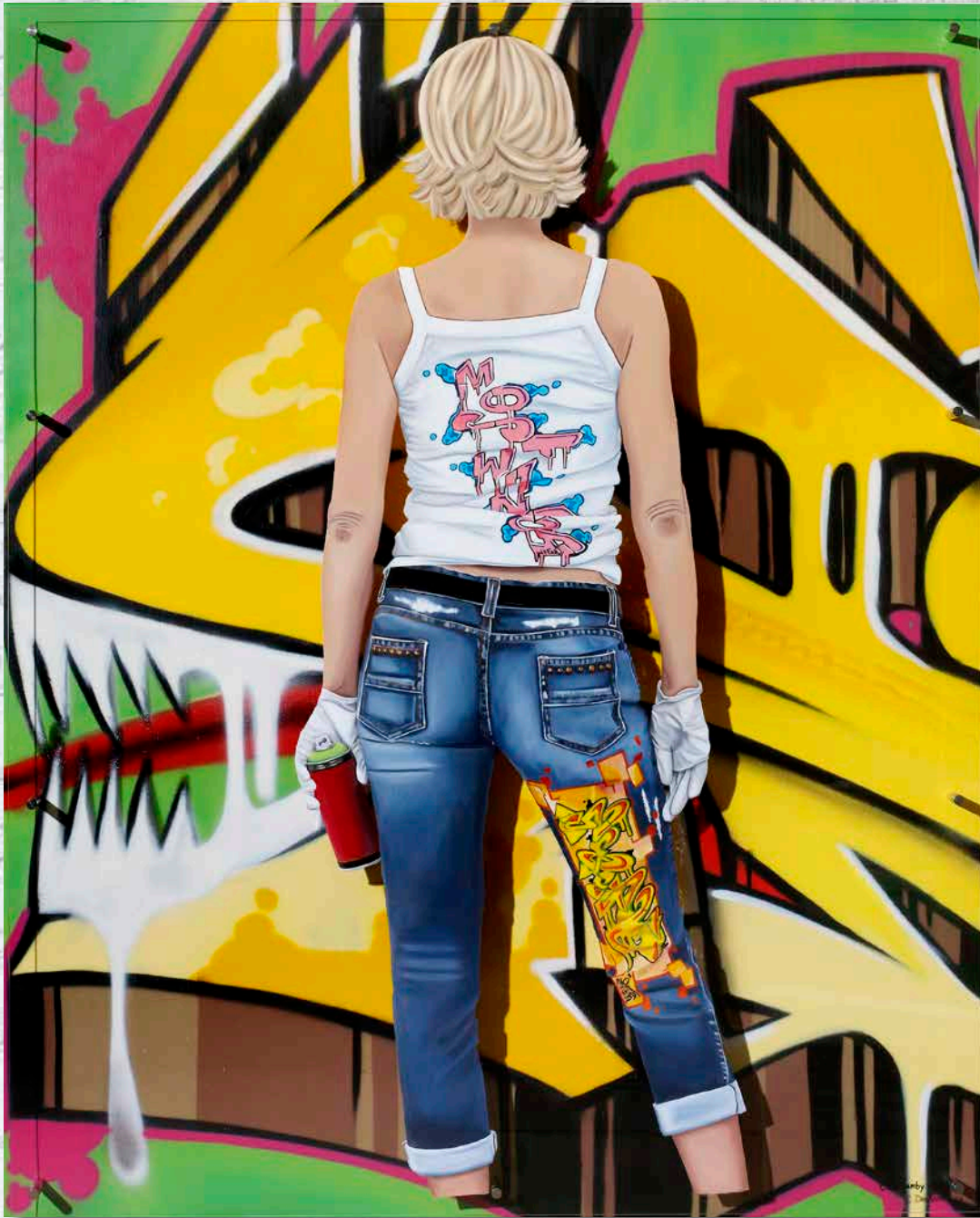
I started with hyper-realistic oil painting on canvas, but then approached pop art and put my own personal stamp on it.

As you undoubtedly know, a unique style only evolves with time. It requires passion, patience and hard work. I've always liked bright colours because they make me happy.

In contemporary art, it's very difficult to create something new and different. In my paintings I position myself on a Perspex sheet, viewing my own works of art from behind or from the side which gives me a three-dimensional effect.

What is your relationship to painting?

It represents a dialogue and an exchange with my innermost self. I am constantly questioning myself. I love life. All its challenges have enabled me to adopt a more positive approach to life. Melancholy and uncertainty are not two of my qualities. I paint what I like and how I feel it.



1) Wild Green 2) Atelier Roses Multicolore 3) Papillon set with 1121 diamonds 4) Capricorne 5) Ferrari 6) Who's he with? 7) Croissant

You often appear in your own paintings. A little narcissistic, don't you think?

Every artist has to love him or herself. That's normal. Every woman can identify with the role she plays in life. She is strong and her presence is the proof of that. I have been unobtrusively appearing in my traditional oil canvases with contemporary Perspex for many years. I regard my work through the eyes, as it were, of a tolerant and sophisticated woman.

How do you find your inner strength and your self-confidence?

My parents always encouraged me to do what I want. Self-confidence grows with age and success. It depends on your experience of life and how you manage to turn negative experiences into something positive. I've always been a fighter and needed challenges.

How do you find your inspiration?

Through meditation. It gives me the strength to stabilise myself and put things into perspective, to experience every moment to



Inspired by painting, «audace» from the wall to the arm ...



the fullest. Every morning I walk through the countryside for up to one and a half hours to draw spiritual power. The day can begin after this invigorating experience. That's how I find my equilibrium. It's like magic!

Do you regard yourself as a medium for women and, if so, why?

Women need to justify themselves far too often. I wanted to bear witness to my independence – and that

of other women. I am constantly striving to evolve. My paintings represent an ongoing look at the female gender. The exchange between the painting and femininity takes place spontaneously.

In 2013 you launched an art and luxury concept. Please tell us more.

Inspired by my painting, I created a handbag collection with matching wallets. Its name: «Audace». The pieces are limited, made of calf leather and available in two sizes; they were made entirely by hand in the best studios in Italy. My passion and that of the craftsmen create luxury



Background painting: Tulipes multicolores, in the foreground: «audace», the successful handbag collection with integral wallet by Caroline Dechamby

quality, combining knowledge, expertise and the ultimate in excellence. The collections are aimed at women with good taste, who are bold, relentless, sensual, independent and generous.

A silver figurine dangles from the handle of the handbags, available in a range of colours, which represents me seen from behind. The «Papillons» handbag symbolises freedom, «Bonhomme» deals with the theme of childhood and represents innocence, and the many colours of «Tulipes» underline well-being. And finally, the handbag design inspired by pack ice «Banquise» with penguins, who live together and support each other and thus represents solidarity.

To make the bags more accessible, I decided to create a pictorial representation of the object in front of the Perspex of a painting: A hand produced by 3D printing – my hand – in polyamide acts as a support through the Perspex. The painting is freed from the canvas and presents the handbag with its figurine, creating an equilibrium between the vagaries of life, its surprises, its joys, its sorrows and, above all, its evolution through unexpected new experiences.

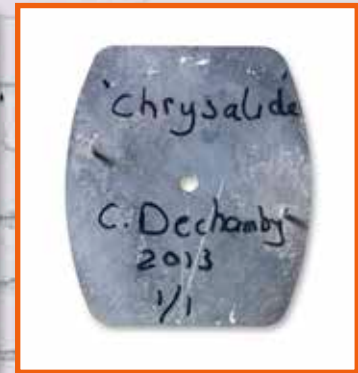
You also designed swimwear; why and with which company do you work?

One of my clients is the owner of Parah, an Italian firm. He liked my work so much that he offered me the opportunity to design my own bikini, swimsuit and sarong collection. We organised a major show in Sardinia in the Billionaire's Club in Porto Cervo. Flavio Briatore organised the evening, which was an overwhelming success and everything sold out.





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- 1) Back of Chrysalide
- 2) Self-winding ETA 2892 calibre
- 3) Photo of Caroline Dechamby
- 4) Dechamby with her «Rêve d'enfant» watch
- 5) «Rêve d'enfant» watch, front and back of dial
- 6) «Chrysalide» watch, front and back of dial
- 7) «Mon Jardin» watch, front and back of dial

Why do you now also create ladies' watches?

A watch is a wonderful personal object that accompanies you everywhere and with which you can identify. I have already created some unique models, known as «Montre d'Art de Luxe», which are sold as works of art. A proven Swiss self-winding ETA 2892 movement, 18-carat rose gold and a dial set with diamonds and gemstones, numbered and signed on the back. I had the movement finished by Dubey & Schaldenbrand, who are based in Chaux-de-Fonds, as a «100% Made in Switzerland» watch. It was important to me to manage the entire project alongside my art.

The watch dials thus became your canvas, you have to first have the idea...

The motifs on the dials are oil paintings that I paint personally under the microscope. I need over fifty hours simply to produce one watch dial. My silhouette on the casing, which you'll recognise from my paintings, and which is looking at the painting that is a miniature version of my canvases, is also hand-made, notably by Olivier Savelli, winner of the 2000 Art Competition in France, who has been working in the watch and jewellery sector for 20 years.

The «Chrysalide» model, created in a tonneau case, is decorated with a sculpture and adorned with 62 diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, other gemstones and tropical butterflies.

In a similar manner, the «Rêve d'enfant» model is adorned with 1,708 diamonds and also has a sculpture and oil painting on the watch dial to represent a child's dream.

The sculpture of the «Mon Jardin» model consists of rose gold and is decorated with 130 diamonds, emeralds, sapphires and other precious stones.

What price do I have to pay for your ladies wrist watches?

As all the pieces are unique, they are traded and sold like works of art: the prices range between CHF 85,000 and 175,000, depending on the precious stones used.

What is your relationship with time?

I am constantly chasing time and have to be very disciplined to allocate my time properly. That can sometimes be quite hard as an artist, as time is the most precious thing I have, because it allows me to create my works of art.

What image do you have of the Swiss watch industry?

The Swiss watch industry has an international reputation in the luxury watch market.

It is a pity that the designs of many brands have become stuck in time and do not dare to make any changes because it could put them at risk. Unlike them, I can do whatever I like; I am completely free in my design work.

As an artist, it is the emotional side of my watches that matters: they are sold like paintings or sculptures. That's the most interesting thing about my concept.

What treasures in your private life give you the strength for your demanding job?

Pride in my children. Cléa is 24 years old, a jewellery designer and mother of a 24-month-old son. Philippe is 22 years old and studying Business and Marketing in the United States and plays in his university's golf team.

Are exhibitions planned for 2014?

Yes in Brussels, Singapore and Tokyo.

When are your next exhibitions?

I have three exhibitions coming up very soon: this summer at the polo in Gstaad and in September at the Formula 1 race in Singapore. I'm organising a show with Natan in Brussels for 21 October. There is also a permanent exhibition in my gallery in Crans-Montana.





And finally: As a successful businesswoman and loving mother, what would your advice be to all women?

Pretty simple: always keep space for yourself to allow yourself to develop. As a mother I know how difficult it is to manage children, housework and a business. You need a healthy lifestyle to find the energy for this. It requires a lot of discipline, but is well worth it. 🌀

- 1) Mon Jardin by Jean-Daniel Lorieux
- 2) Caroline Dechamby painting watch dials in her studio
- 3) Caroline Dechamby with Ollivier Savelli
- 4) Caroline Dechamby with Jonathan Gil

Dubey & Schaldenbrand

Dubey & Schaldenbrand was established in 1946 by Georges Dubey and René Schaldenbrand. Cinette Robert, a visionary, took over the company in 1995. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Cinette Robert built up a powerful network of suppliers for watch movements and components. Dubey & Schaldenbrand watches often contain rare classic mechanical movements or movements with additional intricacies. In this era of high-tech electronics with its manifold opportunities, Dubey & Schaldenbrand sets great store by traditional workmanship and a distinctively extravagant design. In 2009, 25-year-old Jonathan Gil, the son of a Spanish / Armenian jeweller's family, moved the company to La Chaux-de-Fonds, took it over and dusted it off completely.







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