

Wildlife issue

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HELGA KREUZRITTER

Celebrating five decades of
painting and sculpting



Helga Kreuzritter

To celebrate the publication of *The World of Helga Kreuzritter, Five Decades of Sculpting and Painting* by Pashmin Art, *Art of England* chooses 10 standout pieces from this multi-talented German artist who uses myriad techniques to capture the essence of wildlife, humanity and history

1 *The dream of flying,* 2006, plastic

Plastic is not a material that initially associates itself with primitive art, but Kreuzritter is able to manipulate it into playful pieces that express optimism rather than misanthropy. While the piece embodies much of primitive art forms, it captures the unique human ability to dream, aspire and then achieve – it demonstrates that this unique human vision was there from the start. When using her found materials, Kreuzritter always keeps in mind the completed work rather than the individual component parts.





2 *Taurus*, 2010, aluminium painting 60x80cm

Taurus is one of the most powerful signs in the zodiac and has played a role in all major world myths as the apotheosis of masculine power. Yet in spite of its power and bulk, there is also an elusive element to it, which Kreuzritter captures so elegantly. Turning again to aluminium, Kreuzritter's Taurus is brooding and animalistically beautiful.

3 *Underwater world*, 2008, 70x60cm aluminium painting

Kreuzritter's aluminium paintings demonstrate her continual search for the perfect medium for the subject. The metallic sheen that results is ideal for capturing the sparkling life in our seas. She uses specially cut, polished or roughened aluminium plates and adds colour that activates with water, creating fluid, bright and mysterious pieces.





4 *50 million years - Frog*, 1997, relief painting, 85x77cm

Kreuzritter's delight in the miracle of life is nowhere more evident than here in *50 million years - Frog*. The stark yet simple composition suggests that the frog will begin climbing out of the primordial stew from which it evolved. Again harking back to primeval art, Kreuzritter uses the medium of relief painting (where she creates a mixture of liquid wood, wallpaper pastes, adhesives and flax or hemp together to dry in rigid shapes) and muted colour palette to great effect. This amazing piece reminds us that nature is still the best artist. Fossils are only one of the artworks of nature.

5 *Hung*, 2005 plastic collage 53cm

Versatility is a word often used in association with Kreuzritter, and her inventive use of plastic and other 'found materials' is exemplified in *Hung*. While referring to nature – how its roots literally hold humanity aloft – Kreuzritter, with the creation of three penetrating eyes, provokes the viewer to interact with nature and with the artwork. It is perhaps not surprising that this piece found favour with people of all ages.





6 *S-VIP*, 2004, sculpture, 29cm

Here we see more of Kreuzritter's playful nature and her ability to turn discarded objects into creatures with personalities of their own. This piece reveals how Kreuzritter doesn't always look back to the dawn of life and mythology, but to the future and the world we are creating for ourselves. Incidentally, *Svip* in Danish also means flick, trip and general craziness. As Carlyle once put it, "Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand."

7 *Paradise Lost*, 1997 material painting, 80x60cm

Interpreting the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, Kreuzritter successfully captures the primeval innocence of the first humans. But the naivety of their stance is given a darker backdrop, with the plant tendrils suggesting imminent sublimation in sin. The use of material painting to create a relief work is an appropriate medium in which to present the mythology of 'The Fall'.





8 *Crossing over*, 2008, watercolour, 40x30cm

While the background looks grey and apocalyptic, *Crossing over* offers a vision of hope in the form of instinctive manner in which creatures huddle together. The animals, many smiling, cross from one experience to another, and the use of watercolour successfully captures this feeling of the transience of time. Kreuzritter has painted watercolours for over three decades and her assured brushwork is obvious.

9 *Evolution*, 1982, oak sculpture 45cm

Kreuzritter excels at creating tactile, three-dimensional works, which she uses to grapple with biblical and scientific conundrums. *Evolution* successfully presents the miracle of evolution in all its beauty. Using a seemingly 'dead' piece of 'found' wood, Kreuzritter sculpts something beautiful and tender.

Pashmin Art Gallery will exhibit some of Helga Kreuzritter's works at Art Monaco (25-28 April 2013). For details visit www.helga-kreuzritter.com. The World of Helga Kreuzritter, Five Decades of Sculpting and Painting, a bilingual German-English book, is published by Pashmin Art Management in Germany.





Q&A WITH HELGA KREUZRITTER

Kreuzritter has made art since a child and studied sculpture in Vlotho. She has been a prolific artist working in a wide range of mediums. She has had numerous solo shows and her art has been bought all over the world. She's exhibited at Contemporary Istanbul 2010, Art Beijing Contemporary 2011, Art Moscow 2011, Art Taipei 2012, and Art Madrid 2012.

There is an extraordinary primeval quality to your work – how instinctive an artist are you?

After several years of practical artistic studies at the art academy, I felt that kind of formal art activity should end quickly. After three years I finished, and I felt free. I was ready to search and find my own way. One of the major advantages then was to be able to follow my instincts and own ideas. After all, I had felt the need to create my own world since the age of 15. My world is rich in fantasies, imagination, new associations and experimentation with colours, techniques, painting and sculpting.

Could you describe your emotional and artistic involvement to the natural world?

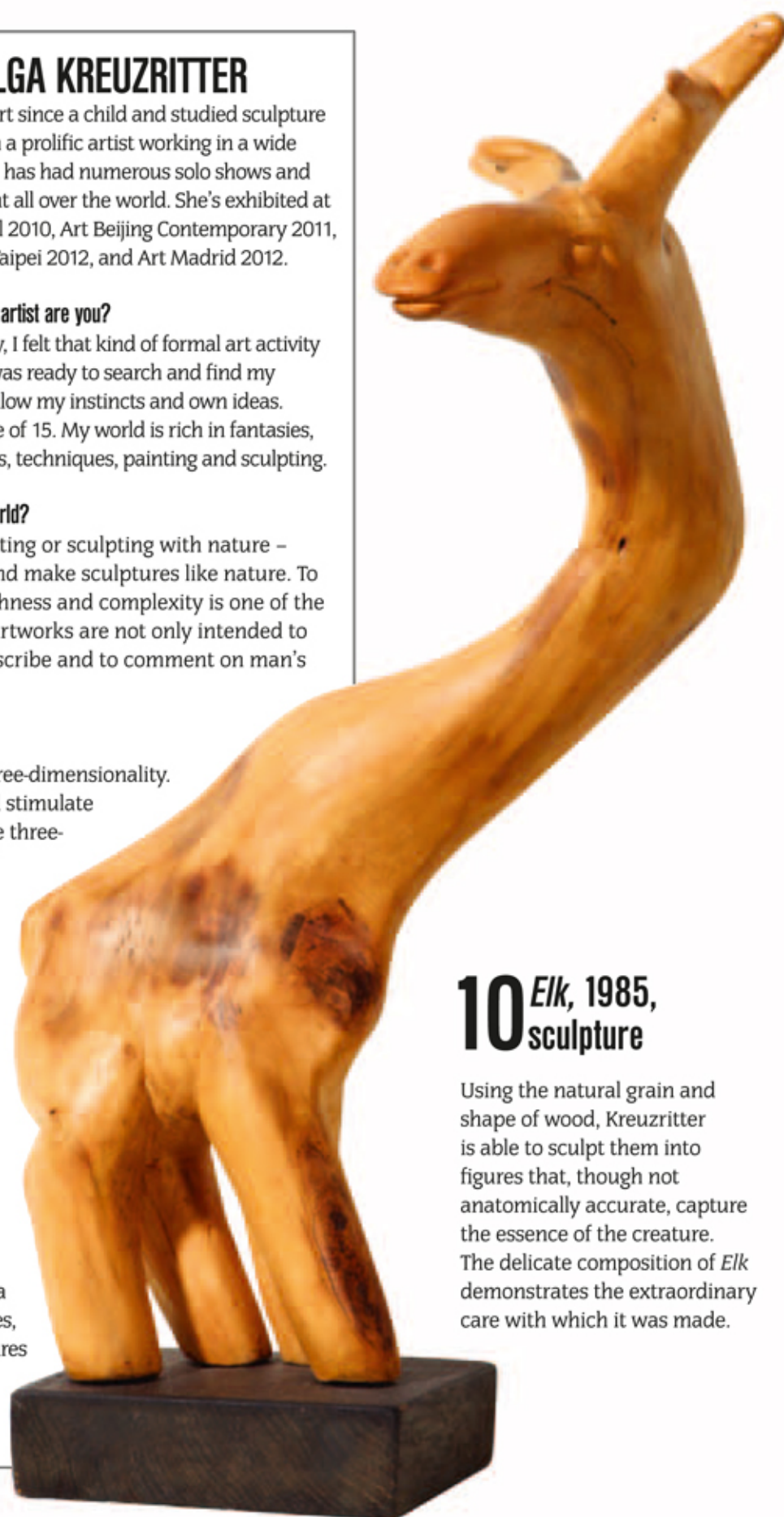
I feel I'm part of nature. I do not create my artworks by painting or sculpting with nature – animals, plants, landscapes – as models, but I try to paint and make sculptures like nature. To me, the natural world in all of its unimaginable diversity, richness and complexity is one of the main elements in my own world as well. Many traits in my artworks are not only intended to reflect the impressions that I get from nature, but also to describe and to comment on man's destructive and disastrous influence on nature.

How do you achieve such highs in abstract and figurative art?

From the beginning of my activities as an artist I preferred three-dimensionality. I wanted to look behind the object, and I wanted to allow and stimulate the visitor to do the same. After all, most things around us are three-dimensional. To me, artworks in two dimensions often suffer in the restriction to two dimensions. Therefore, I developed approaches that allowed me to include the third dimension in my paintings. The results are relief paintings and material paintings. At the same time, I tried to apply ways to change from working figurative to abstract in three-dimensional and in two-dimensional artworks. It is well known that abstraction is an enormous effort that needs careful observation and analysis, imagination and creativity. My goal is to concentrate on the essence.

Describe how you capture the essence of animals and humans.

During all my life I studied animals and plants. Especially in animals, I could observe many characteristic features that can also be seen in human beings. As a dog breeder for many years, I could study many traits of animal behaviour: the love of a mother to her babies, the energy of adult male dogs, the struggles, dominance and inferiority. Many of my artworks – often sculptures – on humans and their behaviour are my comments on similar patterns of behaviour. I like it when my artworks bring a pensive smile or a heartfelt laugh to my audience.



10 *Elk*, 1985, sculpture

Using the natural grain and shape of wood, Kreuzritter is able to sculpt them into figures that, though not anatomically accurate, capture the essence of the creature. The delicate composition of *Elk* demonstrates the extraordinary care with which it was made.