


S L O W

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An abstract painting by Tay Dall, featuring a complex composition of layered colors and textures. The palette includes earthy tones like ochre, sienna, and terracotta, contrasted with vibrant blues, reds, and purples. The brushwork is expressive and varied, with some areas showing fine, hair-like lines and others with thick, impasto applications of paint. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and emotional intensity.

“I just start to paint and the rest flows out of me. It’s all my past experiences, my awareness of the now and my imagination towards the future that allow the work in a sense to be born out of itself.”

Tay Dall: Exploring the Unfamiliar

Tay Dall, one of South Africa’s foremost abstract artists, uses imaginative mediums and multiple layers of colour, mark making, and line drawing to communicate intense passion and energy in her paintings.

TAY DALL

Building on a reputation established in the United States, Tay Dall is one of South Africa's leading modern artists. Her work has been shown in more than 90 exhibitions, is represented by more than 30 galleries, and is prized by thousands of international art collectors. Born in Cape Town in 1966, Dall began taking art classes at the age of 8, finally finishing her education with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Michaelis School of Art at the University of Cape Town. In 1988, she emigrated with her family to Los Angeles, where she worked in the film industry, studied computer graphics, and began exhibiting her work in various venues in her free time. Her eminent success here led to a full-time career as an artist. Dall returned to South Africa permanently in 1995. She currently paints from her studio in Hermanus.

When asked why she began her journey into abstraction, Dall says: "Why attempt to 'repeat' reality, especially when all you are doing is copying something? I always found that working from life was like giving the world an image they already knew and felt familiar and comfortable with. I always wanted to make people look more closely and think more, and if you give your audience a straight replication of life, there is no reason for them to see otherwise. It was therefore so important for me to paint how I felt, what I believed and saw as opposed to how something was in the natural world."

Dall often draws from nature, trying to project a feeling of "inner truth, inner rhythm," which might be inherent in her subject but not obvious to the naked eye. "It is this very notion of seeing beneath or allowing one's own inner voice to comment on what one sees that encouraged me to manipulate my own vision onto the canvas and allow the viewer more room for individual interpretation," she says.

Dall says that her style of painting was a gradual evolution of constant



experimentation and re-evaluation, which, over time, changed into abstraction, away from its beginnings in figuration. One can see this if you compare her older works to her current pieces. "My style is defiantly recognisable but it changes and evolves constantly," she says. "In retrospect, my early work was far darker and there was less colour and I relied more on drawing from nature than from my own inner perceptions and imagination. When I moved to America, my work became brighter and more colourful. Upon returning to South Africa, my work went into a whole new dimension becoming more direct and bolder. My work now is more esoteric, leaving more to the

viewer's imagination."

A need to share what she sees and feels with others is Dall's inspiration. She also endeavours to elicit a certain reaction from her audience. "Making myself and people view things differently and think about everything in a new way," she says. "I definitely do not paint just for myself, even though I obtain an enormous amount of pleasure from the actual act of painting."

Questioned on whether or not she thinks her work is relevant to the South African community, Dall says: "I believe I am a voice that expresses the way I see the community around me. As an artist, my work is reflective of the society in which I live. I

feel and experience South Africa and this consciously and subconsciously penetrates my work. Even though my work is generally abstract, I am still portraying different levels of consciousness that may be obvious in some instances and esoteric in others. All aspects are a direct reflection or projection of the South African culture and community, as they make everyone feel and think about the relevant energies, tensions, moods and realities inherent in South Africa."

Dall's chosen medium is oil, which has, she says, a luminosity and depth not found in other mediums. "There are certain emotional elements that can be heightened through one's use of colour, and oil paint for me allows



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for a broader range of colour and subtle nuances as some colours are translucent and resonate differently." Believing strongly in the exploration of different mediums, Dall often makes use of collage, ink, pastel, and pencil. This use of contrasting mediums creates a more dynamic work with different quality, she says. She has also recently started experimenting with sculptural materials such as glass and stone.

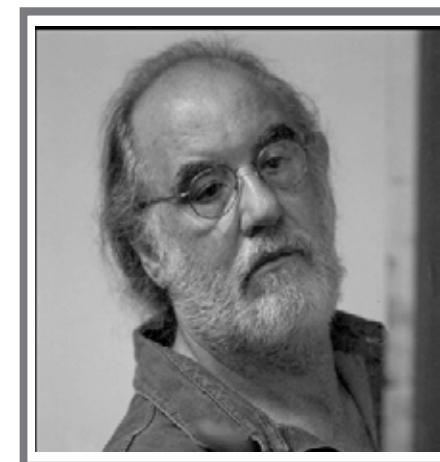
While Dall mostly works on canvas, she has been known to utilise other, less conventional surfaces – old pieces of wood, sheets of metal, plastic, and glass. But she stumbled across these unusual materials rather than intentionally choosing them. "When I was starting out in Los Angeles, I chose to use these surfaces because I didn't

have any money to buy canvas and I would try to find anything to paint on," she says. "After some time I realised that the inspiration for a work was greatly influenced by the surface format on which I painted and this indirectly affected the final work. Each surface inspired a different quality in my work and I started looking at everything possible to paint on and discovered the use of shutters and doors and windows and not just off-cuts of wood. The different formats allowed me to project a completely different meaning and message in my work." Dall keeps these extraordinary artworks for more major exhibitions, as such pieces become incredible, one-of-a-kind works once complete.

For Dall, a successful exhibition is measured by the audience's reaction and

response to her work. If her art provokes a reaction, it is a successful show, she says, adding that she does not measure success from a sales point of view. "Although it is nice to make sales, I am more interested in waking people up and making them think, feel and experience a different way of seeing the world. If something I have created affected them, that makes the exhibition a success. If they can't get the images out of their minds when they go home, even if they don't like the art itself, I feel as an artist that I have accomplished what I set out to do, to make an impression," she says.

Text: Ingrid Ackermann
Images © Tay Dall



MICHAEL HEYNS

Michael's distinctive paint application referred to as 'wet layers on dry paint', or even 'pale colours on a dark background' with its subtle shades have become a distinguishing feature of his work. The accents of colours used for his bright cycad pods, red poppies and indigo landscapes have always been present and is what he is known for.

"My world is my own. Here I am at peace. Here I find enough to relate visually and say: look, this is my world, here I can be in awe, I can experience its fullness - yes, I simply am" –Michael Heyns