

ELKE BZDURRECK

Artist without Borders

By Phillip Melchers



Looking out from the office window of my home it is its own scene: a red-brick house sitting quaintly just over the hedge. It is the home, studio, and gallery of Elke Bzdurreck, she is my next door neighbour and aside from being from Germany and an artist, there is little else I know about her. During my time here in Lyn many people had lived in that home, and one time long ago I had even known one of them. That was not since I was a child however, and so as I made my way up her driveway with the intention to interview her I had casted upon me this daunting effect.

For a second, I was a bit lost when Elke first invited me inside. I knew for certain that I had been in her home before and yet as I entered and looked around nothing seemed familiar to me. It was brighter now, more colourful, there were pieces of art strewn about every corner, across every wall, most of it Elke's, some of it not. Outside it was devastatingly chilly but inside did I find it to be oh so warm.

First guided into her living room, I was shown a wall of various paintings. Across each

canvas I saw a collection of geometrically basic circles painted so vibrantly that they truly seemed to explode into my eyes. I studied them keenly as I overheard Elke use the word "bubbles" to describe them. They are rather bubbly, I thought to myself in agreement as Elke flowed from one conversation about suns, stars and planets, into another about the individual cells within the human body. To her, the connection is easily made. To her it's all a part of nature. To her it can all be painted in the shape of a circle. For me however, it's the perfect analogy to describe exactly as Elke is. In a moment, she could be as far out as the planets themselves floating in her own space, and in another moment she herself transforms, becoming just another cell in human society. Elke takes the mantle of a grand philosopher, a brilliant artist, but then also of a loving mother and wife.

In continuing her tour, I am brought into another room where I am shown intricately detailed portraits of various people of the Pontiac before moving into another wide room as we continue to find art in every

corner. While touring, I had begun to wonder just how only Elke and her husband, a doctor named Martin, could together come to occupy such an expansive space. Elke then went on, describing another of her paintings. It was a painting of an open door where beyond that door was a lawn, and on the other side of that lawn another door. Standing within that door was a little boy. "It's my son," she confesses to me with eyes farsighted, and suddenly, I get it. There was a form of love in every painting; a memory kept safe. It seemed that in every painting she had placed a bit of her soul, replicating, or even creating enough of herself that she could fill the halls of any home. In each room I could feel it now, the phantom steps of other Elke's in other times, and suddenly the space around me grew to feel more surreal.

The tour ended when we arrived in her kitchen. It is here that Elke and I chatted, and I got to learn more about her. She told me how for 4 years before coming to Canada she had studied art in the city of Cologne. In recounting this history also she told me her views on war. She doesn't like it.

These negative views of war sometimes leak themselves into Elke's work. She seems to have an affinity for fire, explosions, for colours and shapes that burst. Often these depictions are radiant, and then other times they seem grimmer. It is almost as though within fire she had found a great duality, both a product to bring on creation, invention, and yet when miss-used, tremendous destruction as well.

Or perhaps her love of fire is just another asset of her love of nature overall. During the tour of her house amongst her collections of planets, suns, and cells, illustrations, and hidden memories, there were also numerous paintings devoted to the beauty of nature. Elke had said that she found nature rather beautiful. Originally she had planned on living on a farm. When that plan didn't work out, she then came to Lyn. In speaking about the area as a whole she told me that, "this area is just so attractive," with particular fondness towards the older settlements, and Thousand Islands.

It is here that I ask Elke where she thinks she belongs. Does she still think of herself as German, or is she now Canadian? What about her art? She immediately corrects me, reminding me that borders were something manmade. Neither she nor her art belongs to any specific nation. In fact, she informs me, she does not paint to find, or claim any specific identity, but rather paints to find, "our centre somewhere that links us together."



With our conversation ending, Elke confesses to me that she still wants more. With concern I look around her house and think to myself how could she possibly want more? She then explains to me that despite her success, she is not material, not really. From my office window, I had looked out and saw quite a splendid red-brick mansion, but to her, it was only a home. When she said she wanted more, what she really meant was she wanted more beauty, more life, and more art. As the afternoon concluded she told me that it's getting harder for her to work, she's getting slower at painting, and yet, she informed me, even if she were with Parkinson's she would find a way to paint. She would find a way to paint her planets, suns, and cells, to paint her memories, and the beauty of nature as she sees it all around her, to paint and paint again, to find that hidden centre which somehow linked us all together, which to her, is nothing but a collection of simple circles exploding radiantly; just another collection of bubbles on her wall.

Blurb: For more information on her work and gallery space you can visit Elke's website at elkebd.com [LH](#)



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