

## ARTS



"Lagrimas" Digital © Mamta B. Herland  
Contribution to "Sinfonia de Amor"

## Introduction

In 2005 I was invited by the Ecuadorian government department PMT, Programa Del Muchacho Trabajador del Banco Central del Ecuador, to organise a travelling exhibition in Ecuador to create awareness about child labor. As founder of C.A.U.S.E. (Coalition of Artists United for Social Awareness) with +- 140 members (artists and poets) from 26 different countries worldwide I send out an invitation to participate. 46 artists and 24 poets responded positively and contributed either an artwork or poem. Among them Mamta B. Herland. The whole "Sinfonia de Amor" exhibition (title of the exhibition) was donated to the PMT. From there on Mamta B. Herland and I started a regular email correspondence. In 2011 I was invited by a gallery in Antwerp, Belgium, to be the curator of a small group exhibition. I invited Mamta B. Herland who agreed saying "now you'll even get to know me even better". She was in Antwerp to be at the opening and we had a good time. And yes, I know her better now but even more so after the interview below.

*Gino: Mamta, you were born in a small Northern village of India and all of a sudden, in 1987, you moved to Norway. Or was it not so sudden?*

Mamta: I was born in a small place called Laluk, in the state of Assam in the North Eastern dale of India with a family background of doctors, engineers, lectures and lawyers. Prior to completing pre-university I went to eight different schools within India starting from primary schools until I started college of which few years spend in England. During the late 60's and 70's and for several years my parents had lived in England and relocated themselves in places like Ipswich, Sunderland and Liverpool and consequently needed to transfer to different schools. From a very early age I was fascinated by the art of music, dance and performance that involved emotion and sensitivity yet never thought I would end up as a visual artist as I don't remember drawing a single line or painted upon a canvas until much later. As a little girl I wished to become a performance artist but was not encouraged by my parents as it wasn't considered a real profession as it was becoming a doctor, engineer, lawyer or professor that were naturally given much more importance. So while waiting for something interesting to happen I carried on with my general science studies in Assam without having much interest when I suddenly had the opportunity to experience a unique year abroad. A friend who was living in Norway suggested the Folke Høgskole where any foreign student could apply for a year study and could choose a free subject discipline. It seemed at that time a perfect escape from thrashing about by moving to Norway and also when I was introduced to arts.

*Gino: you also studied in Australia (visual art studies at Sydney College of Arts) and the UK (Masters degree from the faculty of Fine Art at the Winchester College of Art). Successfully? And I'm not asking this in terms of getting a degree or master, but in terms of influences on your views on art and as an artist and originally from India? By the way, the only artist I know from India is Anish Kapoor who I admire a lot but I'm sure there are plenty people originally from India living and working as an artist in the West.*

Mamta: As being Indian by origin from a land of huge cultural and traditional diversities incessantly sparked by strong, bright, vibrant and festive colours somehow I believe that had and still have obvious impact in my works. The use of colours and its aesthetical superiority is the basic characteristic that I want to be able to instantly captivate and allure the viewer. Then materialization of an idea or concept in some of my work had generally taken place in the process of manipulating these colours by range of classical and modern tools of digital media. There are number of Indian artists spread in different countries in the West and Anish Kapoor is one of them with his larger than life works are simply stunning.

In Sydney I was taught to conceptualize and contextualize art by creating projects based assignments and hybrid works. Respectively it was done through paintings, printmaking, design and dark room photography. Moreover, travelling around the vast Australian territory and taking in the many glimpses of variable landscapes, primeval lifestyle of the aborigines and their closeness to the ultimate nature opened up many ideas. During mid 90's at the Sydney college of Arts while still learning to paint the new software Adobe Photoshop was introduced to different art institutions which I found to be a powerful and fascinating tool and saw as possible potential tool for my future work. And so when I returned to Norway I took up a graphic design study in Oslo aiming somehow to combine digital art with fine art. Later, while I was admitted to a Masters study in the UK, I sought ways to sharpen my understanding and skills in creating works in the new media and called 'digital art'. However, as this was relatively new and was not considered as main stream art, I was told by the head of my department that the college couldn't provide me with expertise in the field I was aiming at. Only few colleges in London like Camberwell College offered studies in digital art and it was also a time when art online raised many debates on copyright, authenticity and uniqueness consequently leading to sceptisms and questions of acceptances. These were interesting and much relevant issues for my work and therefore I chose to write my dissertation based on the Internet and its impact in the art world. It lead to many raw discussions from many well established galleries, artists and art institutions and was later published on several online sites and used in libraries abroad. I have been mostly putting emphasis on creating digital art ever since.

*Gino: I know your work since long but now I decided to write an article about it and after visiting your website again even I, as an internet-holic, was overwhelmed with the huge amount of works displayed. Lucky me, and us viewers, we can choose in terms of disciplines which are 6 groups ( digital art, painting, mixed media, photography, sculpture and video). ( www.mamtaart.com ) Still too much to be able to pay attention to each group in one go so I started to reduce to the groups to painting, digital art and mixed media. Before I continue the interview let me go over the first discipline of my choice to the last starting with painting: Now mind you, this is an overall impression and not a jury report (and this counts for all my reviews). I like your paintings but I see a constant shifting back and forth from classical to more modern, from West to North to East and South. Like if you are working based on an ' uncalibrated ' compass.*



"Abandoned" Painting  
© Mamta B. Herland



"Moment" Painting  
© Mamta B. Herland



"Sentiment" Painting  
© Mamta B. Herland

Mamta: First of all, yes, I have different media and disciplines of works as I am inquisitive and like to experiment, explore and see what I can create. You can't find one 'Mamta Style' rather 'Mamta disciplines' or 'Mamta diversity'. As far as the record goes having been in more than 20 countries and in different states, as well lived in four different countries had untied a certain sense of belonging and identity. Moreover, India alone is the most diverse country and certainly I am rooted and predisposed by the varieties and consequently I believe is the reason for possessing an ' uncalibrated ' compass. Although initially colour alone what seemed to be essential enough to bring about the simple esthetical quality I moved toward more metaphorical and chose nature as subject matter. As in my earlier paintings inspired by pristine like mountain landscapes of Norway, especially while spending times in a cottage I had the opportunity to collect ideas by means of photography and capturing videos as sources of inspiration. Starting with semi-abstract to abstraction and figuration my painting has become more and more erratic without loosing its shades. The paintings were given both figurative and non figurative forms as to intrigue both the inner and outer sense.

Gino: *Next discipline is digital art: quite a variety of themes also here split up in groups and as such not as such defined by you on your website but by me as a visitor and as such there is in some works a reference to European/Scandinavian Masters, internet, universe, identity and nature. Also here a lot of going back and forth.*



"Vision" Digital  
© Mamta B. Herland



"Flow" Digital  
© Mamta B. Herland



"Baghdad mon amour" Digital  
© Mamta B. Herland

Mamta: These varieties were created by using contemporary tools and techniques with no particular subject matter alone or style as I believe in the autonomy of art and simply express in the moment. However, my ideas generate from a range of sources; memories, cluttered sketches of my own, photos, moving images, internet, meeting people of different identities and so on. The references are mainly time and project specific and rather statements as one can see in the series like 'identities' or 'parallax views'. However it is apparent that internet, universe, identity has broader influences by my multicultural background. It is always amazing to see and learn about the approaches of great masters and famous contemporary artists and few made an impact yet none so far could swayed me yet. However perhaps works that referers most to earlier 'Masters' are the digital works such as 'M&M&M' (Monet&Munch&Mamta) where I have taken elements from Munch's "Scream" and Monet's Garden' recomposed to a new work so as to comment or demonstrate the issues pointed out in my dissertation. With doing so thus questioning how much one can "steal" or "copy" from other artist and call it own or unique.

Gino: *Last discipline of my choice: multi media: also here a lot of going back and forth. Now to close this chapter I do realize that the spectator has to see the works in real life. For example texture and use of materials are very important. Also you use a lot of reds in all disciplines. Favourite colour or chosen purposely? And before continuing to the interview one last observation: what I miss is what is called a 'red line', and I don't mean that necessarily in terms of themes but it could also be the 'Mamta B. Herland red line'.*

Mamta: Textures and materials are certainly important elements in the disciplines where I use traditional materials as paint, paper, fabric, ink etc that unfortunately cannot be felt when displayed digitally on line. A texture doesn't necessarily gives depth to a painting however it gives sense of great tangibility and present distinctive surface. Although I have been using often warm colours my favourite colour is blue. There are so many shades of blue but I mostly like sky and ocean blue as it symbolizes human emotion of sadness or happiness, heaven, eternity and tranquility. In terms of red tread I never intentionally made conscious efforts to analyze its implication or be critical trying to create one. Redline is important in terms of creating brand and for market purpose hence recognition but it narrows down creativity and loses wide audiences. For me art has been always for sake of its own and to keep up possibilities for new ideas, explorations and extensions beyond borders of disciplines. As an artist spontaneity and diversification are important in my artistic development that does not stop in one key style. However, I could carefully say that I see the ultimate red-line manifests within the creator itself one that galvanizes much creative diversity.



"Hallow" Multi-media  
© Mamta B. Herland



"Missing face 1" Multi-media  
© Mamta B. Herland



"Interruption" Multi-media  
© Mamta B. Herland

Gino: *Now let's go to the 'cherish on the cake'. Something that has been on my mind from the very start: the ladder and mysticism. A symbol and word you quite often use. (For the reader some 'translation': the ladder not only has a symbolic meaning but also often a religious meaning and indeed a mystic meaning. The 'Jacob-sladder' might pop up to some). Why the ladder and the reference to mysticism?*

Mamta: Like with great danger comes astonishing beauty so as with mystery that often comes with a compelling poignancy yet certain beauty. It is something within each person that beholds intangible, secret and uncanny, and a continuous search for soul and spirituality. I often use a ladder like objects as to indicate a path or direction to uplift sort of that spiritual realm. My wanderings and casual discoveries anywhere I travelled and images ending in horizons of the earth the eyes can reach is a moment that always stirs me with wonder. And always, as in life, with every step we take and the climb we make never seem to end or ever could reach there. The enigma and yet the beauty of that unknown is what exert a pull on me.

Gino: *Ok, I'll release you now from this annoying person. Although, sorry, I cannot but give you this statement: God is an art form.*

Mamta: Absolutely, I too think every creation is an art form. However definition of art in the contemporary institutional theory and in artworld now has a looser meaning that only being defined by contextualizing in a white cube. I intend my work always be in transitional phase and endures this moment and rest is unknown. Finally you could say that the assorted display of my work in many pointing in different directions are the north south east west metropolises of many wild cosmopolitans and also the ones that cannot function without the other and therefore have to co-exist and be coherent.

Gino: *Mamta, thank you, also on behalf of the readers, for this interview and your time and the best of success.*

[www.mamtaart.com](http://www.mamtaart.com)

*Gino d'Artali*