

**REBECCA VELLA**

Rebecca Vella was born in 1967 and educated in Victoria, Gozo. Self-taught, she took up painting and sculpting in her teens. Art critic EV Borg describes Rebecca's art as:

"....personal, intimate and unique. It is autobiographical and yet so universal and timeless.... It is essentially an analysis of the psyche, of thought process, of the workings of the mind through the observation and examination of physiognomy or facial expression. Rebecca analyses the psychology of man with ruthlessness, vigour, thoroughness, shrewdness and intensity..... Her art is unique and vital. Its spell attracts adventurous explorers to unravel its mysteries, the uncharted regions of the subconscious and surreal." (Malta This Month, 06. 09. 2002)

'In my works I try to reflect my emotions' she says 'Many of my works are concerned with demonstrating the unpleasant side of human existence - that ugliness that is all around us but perhaps intentionally hidden from us or by us. I am not so much concerned with analysis as with acknowledging that this side of life exists. *Split-head* (concrete), for example, is representative of man's multi-personality, sometimes intentionally hypocritical sometimes due to illness (dementia)."

Her works were first staged in 1987 at the Circolo Gozitano in a dual presentation with her sister,



**Split Head**

Nicholette. Two other exhibitions *Perceptions* (1998) and *In-Tandem* (2002) followed. Both were dual exhibitions again with her sister and both held at the Ministry for Gozo. Altogether Rebecca has also taken part in twenty collective art exhibitions in Malta and abroad. Her early works (1980's) were models in wax and plaster-of-Paris. Throughout the eighties she continued experimenting in other media: pencil, ink and oil pastels on paper. She took up modelling in clay and concrete in the early nineties. During this period she also experimented with acrylic on canvas and circa 1995 began sculpting in the local limestone known locally as *franca*.

Her sculpture in stone is described by EV Borg as

"strong, defiant, forceful and personal". Writing in the *Sunday Times* (17/11/02) E. Fiorentino remarked how one piece in stone entitled *Inner Self* and which featured in the 'In-Tandem Exhibition 2002' was particularly aesthetic "with its tight-knit composition".

Always eager to try new media and techniques when the opportunity arises, during 2001 Rebecca produced a unique collection of terracotta masks.

Rebecca is also a writer of poetry and short stories in the Maltese and Italian languages. Her works in Italian have received awards and recognition in various international competitions.



**Inner Self**

**CHRONICLE**

- 1987 - DUAL EXHIBITION AT THE CIRCOLO GOZITANO
- 1990 - WIRJA PERMANENTI TAL-ART - GOZO
- 1991 - 4-MAN COLLECTIVE ART EXHIBITION. MINISTRY FOR GOZO
- 1994 - GOZITANIA - HOTEL TX, CENC
- 1996 - MALTAFEST
- 1997 - WOMEN ARTISTS 'ESPRESSJONI MARA'
- 1997-2001 - EDEN
- 1997 - BIENNALE OF MALTA
- 1997 - COLLECTIVE ART EXHIBITION - VICTORIA
- 1998 - 'PERCEPTIONS' DUAL EXHIBITION IN VICTORIA
- 1998 - ARTI KRISTIJANA CATHEDRAL MUSEUM - MDINA
- 1998 - DWEJRA COLLECTIVE ART EXHIBITION
- 1999 - PERMATEX ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
- 1999 - JUM IL-MARA - P.N. BEADQUATERS
- 2000 - COLLECTIVE ART EXHIBITION - KAUFERING, GERMANY
- 2001 - COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION - GOTLAND, SWEDEN
- 2002 - INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION - CYPRUS
- 2002 - 'IN-TANDEM' DUAL EXHIBITION IN VICTORIA

# NICHOLETTE VELLA

Her forms dance to a strange, silent tune. Her distinctly female, rounded and fecund forms perform in a group, as in a seance, in a trance. They seem inebriated not with music but with movement.

Pattern, beat, rhythm and movement are woven together in a fine arras. And the articulated forms in a defined outline vibrate with oscillatory movement, ecstatically to a strange beat, deliberate but not wild or frenetic but rather rapturous, charmed and spellbound. They are the maenads or 'bacchante', in a good mood.

The figures revolve and rotate. Alive they are entwined, engaged and in synchrony. They evolve and yet remain static - movement in repose. A benevolent exotic force holds them together. It is not the effect of a hurricane or tornado but a harmonious, balancing and cohesive action, a centrifugal force of caressing, concentric ripples that acts like hypnosis, haunts, mesmerises and bewitches.

Nicholette Vella (1963) has a large and thick portfolio of drawings and sketches. It is the result of a strong passion, an obsession for graphical expression, the work of a lifetime that completely reveals her soul. She is still quite young at 39 but very promising, determined and prolific.

At the beginning of her career Nicholette was explicitly attracted to the work of Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98). Her initial phase is purely graphical, a contrast of black and white articulated and defined structures. The ornamental quality in her linear rhythms and the affinity of her expression with Japanese prints and painted decoration on red and black Greek pottery project her leanings. She seems to discover colour at a later stage. She uses colour as an end in itself, to stain shapes and forms but effectively to produce texture not plasticity.

Her paintings on board are quite evocative. 'Horses' is a meticulous and consummate work, brilliant in its clear defined outlines, articulated forms and 'intarsia' qualities. It is an essay that combines the inlay or 'tesserae' quality of an Uccello painting with the oriental flavour of a Japanese print. The result is iconic, sacral, animistic - some kind of large amulet or talisman. It emanates the sympathetic magic of totemism. The horses frolic and gambol about and around to their hearts' content. The texture of the stained wood and its grain, the etched graffito outline, the deep red of the background and the balanced, harmonious tints of the horses' hides and mane are all woven into a gorgeous arras.

*The Tree of Life* is quite a feat. Unerringly and with aplomb Nicholette creates a fine embroidery or tapestry of fecund female forms with heavy pear-like breasts that are transformed into the fruit of the tree of life, the produce of our labour. The whole work is a sustained metaphor, a metamorphosis of female forms into the tree of life, of knowledge - roots, trunk, leaves, foliage and fruit. Possibly this is Nicholette's most perfect composition yet so natural, pleasing and satisfying. Such work is ideal and could be transformed into sophisticated unique tapestry by delicate fingers to hang in rich collections and museums.



*The Tree of Life*

*Faces* is hauntingly beautiful in its rich, bold, clean colours and graphic, linear design. The sharp and distinct shapes and forms of this elaborate inlay are so flat and yet float and surface in a space so unreal and yet so tangible. The concept behind such composition is very modern. The geometric or ideogram quality of its highly decorative outline is inspired by oriental art.

Bold and effective is the series of bathers or nudes in a group as in some spacious spa, bath or harem. The juxta-positioned female forms remind me of the 'odalisques' by great



*Bathers*

French masters of actual Moorish scenes in North Africa which they depicted in the Romantic era.

Nicholette Vella was born in Victoria, Gozo in 1963. She is virtually self-taught although as a child she attended some art lessons at school under Maryrose Caruana, and a short course (1983-85) at the Society of Art, Manufactures and Commerce under Angelo Agius, the well-known sculptor from Zebbug who studied in Rome.

Nicholette Vella has almost worked in splendid isolation and this has rendered her work less derivative. Her artistic career spans the last fifteen years and has worked in two art studios in Victoria, Gozo. She has taken part in many collective exhibitions and two personal shows that she has shared with Rebecca, her sister.

Nicholette has a mind of her own, loves nature and the divine and looks forward to a beckoning future, in the hope that she would share her expression with those who love art as a journey in spirituality.

E.V. Borg