

# Baukje Spaltro

## An artist's statement

*"The demand for our WHERE is meaningful than ever, more meaningful than those to us WHAT.*

*We must focus on the place that people create to be who they are. This place I have given the name ATMOSPHERE.*

*Spheres are space creations as immune function. ."*

*Peter Sloterdijk, from Spheres 2003*

"A PANORAMA is about the perception and experience of their own environment, the sphere.

I've always felt the need, to paint my vision of my environment. I am inspired by the actual (physical / mental) space. The 'hard' panorama is a representation of the physical space and refers to the observable form of city buildings and asphalt. The 'soft' panorama refers to the experience, the subjective experiences and expectations of users of a place.

Between 2005-2008 I worked in Amsterdam on BAUC (Amsterdam Breitner Under Construction), a tribute to the 'hard' city full of pits/ constructions views. In 2008 I painted my series INCANTO, in the colors of my perception of the Tuscan landscapes. Here I made the first soft panoramas. Between 2009-2011 I worked on 'soft' views: in KANTIJ. Drawn or painted, which is visible?

Since 2012 I paint the 'Spheres', inspired by the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. "It's not a matter of knowing who you are, but to understand where you are". The Sphere (company, environment, place, future) is a personal and important place that creates and defines



**Miracle on a tricycle, between city and nature**  
2008/2009, mixed technique on linen, 185 x 270 cm

the own identity'. In what sphere are you? Through color I catch the different Sphere I notice. I research the tension between the perception of the person inside and the outside world. What image to follow? Color or drawing? Front or back focus? Drawn or painted, which is visible? Is the Reality of a SPHERE not always double-interpretable?

Breathless as atmosphere; as the personal perception of time, place and expectations. SPHERES are about the personal view of the positive as negative. In *Breathless1* the inner

and outer space of today's western society. What's happening outside and insight. So is the meaning of breathless as well female journalist is looking at the viewer telling with her look how breathless the hole Syria problem is. She is strong and the word conscience. If you look good you discover that the soldiers in the background are weeping.

In *Breathless 2+3*, the meaning of breathless, is from the inner space of a cocooning happy couple. They are breathless and listening and absorbing information from the outside world

in their own personal inner world. Also breathless. How different can a word be, how different the meaning of the atmosphere. It's the color of the atmosphere who defends the meaning of the place, time and expectation.

We are defining the atmosphere through our perception, we are making our reality.

I work with the power of color, creating a two dimensional space, in which everyone discovers his own personal sphere. The Sphere (company, environment, place, future) is a personal and important place that creates and defines the own identity'. In what sphere are you?

Through color I catch the different Spheres I notice. In the Sphere I research the tension between the perception of the personal inside and the outside world.

## Baukje Spaltro, a short bio

postHBO course Hogeschool Amsterdam  
Project Management (Amsterdam 2002)

MA painting Academia Belle Arti di Brera prof.  
F.Breschi (Milano - 1997)

course 'explore the art market'(Amsterdam  
1995)

MA painting Phil Bloom en Jurriaan van Hall  
(Amsterdam 1993-1994)

course 'Art is business, entrepreneurship is an  
art' (Amsterdam 1991)

BA painting + theaterdesign Hogeschool voor  
de Kunst Utrecht (Utrecht 1986-1990)



An interview with

## Baukje Spaltro

**Hi Baukje, a warm welcome to LandEscape. Let's start with our usual ice breaker question: what in your opinion defines a work of Art?**

**And what are in your opinion the distinctive features that marks the contemporariness of a piece?**

Hi, nice icebreaker question. For me a piece of art is an image that is strong, seductive, powerful, autonomous, independent and perceptive. It tells and speaks for its self in a own language. That's it. Very important it's an eye language and not a brain thing. This eye language communicates through shapes, lines and colors, and tells mostly a unconscious thought about this society, world and the perception by me about it. The marks about the contemporariness of a artwork are the way the image is made. This eye language is defined by the culture, the society, thoughts and especially the language and grammar of the current time.

**I would like to ask you something about your background: I have read in your bio that you have studied both in the Netherlands and in Italy, at the prestigious Accademia di Brera, in Milan. How much formal training has impacted on the way you produce your art nowadays? Please tell us something about your evolution as an artist and what has lead you to become the artist you are today.**

I'm half Italian and half Dutch. I was born in Italy, then my parents split I went to the Netherlands, studied there my BA Fine Arts, then I made my MA in Milan at Brera. I always travelled between those two cultures. So I see the world from two perspectives. That's how I discovered the powerful role of culture and civilization of a country. How important language is, the spoke and eye language. My perception of things in society is layered. So to speak I'm also homeless because



Baukje Spaltro

in Amsterdam I'm the Italian artist and in Milan I'm the Dutch painter. I will always be the foreigner, who perceives from the outside of a culture. From my studies I've learned to think autonomous / out of the box from the Dutch Art High School. In Milan I've learned not to be afraid to use esthetics, to use colors.

In the Netherlands I've learned to draw in a free way, not to be captured from old theories and techniques. In Italy I've learned to think big! But the most I learned by myself just to do

things and keep on painting, without listening how to do things but just discover them by myself. After the formal training I just continued to paint, and each period I had a main thought to research, so I started to paint a series.

Only at the end of a series I discover what the series is about. Once I have an explanation/answer for myself what I'm doing the series was finished.

My motor is the drive to discover how things are made, where a thought is about.

**Can you tell us about your process and set up for making your artworks?**

**In particular, on what technical aspects do you mainly focus in your work?**

As said I paint, so I can study the thought and image, my perception of the zeitgeist (my time, society and space). I do this in a serial because each period I'm into a special thought, I want to study something specific. I started with the human skeleton, then the human face, then the body. Three series made between 1994 and 1999. In 2000 I started with the space around mankind, first thoughts about the human role into society then thoughts about mankind and his own identity. From 2000 the space around is determined.

Each series is a study to discover. So I start with ideas feelings, opinions, then I make sketches and start to paint. Very important I work with an 'anti - logic attitude'. I want to create from my subconscious. Because I'm in the same mood, I use the same colors and pictorial elements. But as soon I catch myself of thinking or designing a picture I change completely my work attitude and start to boycott my self.

Last years I work with a lot of thin painted layers. I make sketches, also with color hints. Once I start the painting I put everything away and start to paint, from my thought and subconscious. Leading in this process is to watch good to see what happens on the canvas. So that the canvas tells me how to proceed, and not my mind. It's all about learning to see good, to perceive and to learn the power of an image/colors.

If I notice to be working safely I completely change my strategy. I close my eyes, grab a color and just start to use this. With this I obtain strange color combinations. I see that unlogical choices shimmering cause. The most important thing into my work is that I want colors to shimmer on the flat surface. This happens only if I dare to make strange choices on the canva-



es, the unexpected are always the best combinations. My 'anti-logic attitude' can also be destructive, because I just act, make subconscious choices. Not always an improvement for the work, but always an adventure to create.

Through the years I develop an own mixed painting technique. I make my own medium, and I use acrylic neon and oil colors. I also use pens, pencils, markers and other graffiti materials. I work with color surfaces and drawings.

**Now let's focus on you works: let's start from the Incanto series, which, as you have explained, has been inspired by Tuscan landscape or -it would better to say- Tuscan Panorama. By the way, it seems that you have a close bond with Italy... isn't it?**

I'm half Italian, there are also my roots. I love colors, energy, sun and landscapes. In 2008 I've worked for one year in Tuscany, in the artist in residence Frantoio, in a medieval village. Here I discovered the beauty of a wide landscape. Because I do not want to capture the realistic view of my surroundings, but I paint spheres, I prefer to talk about PANORAMAS instead about Landscapes. In which I like to focus on the relationship subject surrounding.

A PANORAMA is about the perception and experience of their own environment, the sphere. I've always felt the need, to paint my vision of my environment. I am inspired by the actual (physical / mental) space. The 'hard' panorama is a representation of the physical space and refers to the observable form of city buildings and asphalt. The 'soft' panorama refers to the experience, the subjective experiences and expectations of users of a place. Between 2005-2008 I worked in Amsterdam on BAUC (Amsterdam Breitner Under Construction), a tribute to the 'hard' city full of pits/constructions views. In 2008 I painted my series INCANTO, in the colors of my



*Multatuli in Vinci, 2008 / 2009, 109 x 200 cm, mixed technique on linen INCANTO - betovering*

perception of the Tuscan landscapes. Here I made the first soft panoramas. Incanto, means enchantment in Italian, and talks about the beauty the colors of Tuscan Landscape for me in those period. These are my first 'soft' panoramas. Soft because these are images created from my perception of the Tuscan Landscape. In those days I've met my current husband. I went to Tuscany to make 'hard' panorama's about Amsterdam.

I want to look what happens if I paint my subject, the constructions views of Amsterdam, from a distance. Instead of construction views I've made a series full of enchantment, energy, colors, an ode to life, beauty and love. I was in love so my inner world, and my perception of the Tuscan landscape was full of vivid colors and the human figure came also back into my work.

**Another stimulating artwork of your is Red Network, from the KANTIJ series, that our reader can admire in the following pages. What was your inspiration for this pieces? By the way, could you take our readers through your creative process when starting a new project?**

Between 2009-2011 I worked on 'soft' views: in KANTIJ. Drawn or painted, which is visible?

After *INCANTO* series, I was back in Amsterdam and into a new mood, sphere. I was intrigued by the layers of perception, by the fact that reality is subjective (zeitgeist thought). I start to paint more thin layers and to make pictures with more depth. I was fascinated by the combination of drawings and color spaces. The balance and also the tension between abstraction and figuration. Important to mention is that I make the things I'm in, the mood the sphere I'm in inspires me to paint. So during a series I most of the time I don't



*Incanto (over 43 jaar), 2008, 65 x 180 cm gemengde techniek op linnen INCANTO - betovering*



realize what I'm investigating. Now that the KANTIJ series is closed I realize, I see what I was doing. Red Network is inspired by a street view of the medieval village in Tuscany. Here I just used color and lines to show that reality is subjective. If the viewer is patient it will discover depth and figuration into this abstract image. But if the viewer is impatient it will only notice splashing paint and an unfinished picture.

I like when a picture is open, or unfinished a kind of interesting edginess. Then the viewer can finish himself the picture.



*La vita va .....Mimmo & Mario (from KANTIJ series) 95 x 145 cm mixed techniques on linen 2011*

**There's a couple of paintings of yours that has particularly impressed me and on which I would like to spend some words: Geef me een kanten sluier which means Give me a lace veil. and La vita va... Mimmo and Mario. The feature that has struck me is the synergy between the subject and the colors.**

**So I can recognize an effective symbiosis between two apparently contrasting elements: vivid colors and contemplative -I dare to say "eremitic"- messages. even though I'm aware that this might sound a bit exaggerated, do you agree with this analysis?**

I like your analysis!

La vita va... **Mimmo and Mario**. Is inspired by a family picture with my old Italian twin



*Purple Red Network, 2011 oil/mixed technique on linen*

*Description: It's not what you think it is, but what is it? Colorfield: a timeless landscape which defines where we are. Rather than presenting a factual reality, I conjure the realms of our imagination, our sphere (networks).*

*My work express the atmosphere through abstracted figuration. The first reaction is this is a drawing, what is it? The spectator searches for information so he can orientate himself into the timeless landscape.*

*Only after a few minutes, after the eye got used at the colours, the spectator discovers a little child in the middle. This work expresses the atmosphere through abstracted figuration.*

uncles. I was shocked when I saw this wedding picture of 3 years ago. I didn't see them for years but in my memory they are always young. But in the picture they are old men. I was touched by the picture because you could see into it that life goes on (meaning of the title), behind the old men there is already the new generation.

Here I drew Dutch and Italian trees; into this image I made an interesting tension between drawing and painting, between subject and color spaces, the colors are in balance but also shimmering. These two paintings I created due to my 'anti-logic attitude', Here the paint, canvases, my subconscious created those autonomous images. Which I'm very proud of.

Give me a lace veil is the main artwork of the series KANTIJ, because of the different layers into it. Here also there is the subjectivity of reality. "reality is layered, a painted space has depth and is also layered" There is a layer under this picture of the famous statue of Cupido and Psyche door Antonio Canova.

Also the contradiction between vivid colors and gloomy images is for me interesting to create depth, I make a panorama, I show a sphere. But it's the viewer who completes the picture finally, he chooses which direction to finish the image. In the Netherlands we have a way of saying to talk about subjectivity; we say: do you see the glass of wine half full or half empty? How you look at things depends on how you perceive an image, or how you see reality.

**In your recent KANTIJ series we can recognize a recurrent presence of the green color, as in the interesting Green Conversation, in the following pages: could you tell us something about this feature? By the way, does your process let you to visualize your Art before creating? Do you know what it will look like before you begin?**

I work unconsciously as I already said. I just act into a mood, then the colors come out and also images start to develop, layer by layer. I am like a tourist in a new country, I have to orientate myself, take position, and start to learn a new language. Each subject, painted space and color field, has its own grammar. I start with a mood, impression, but then the process of creation has to take over. Otherwise I think to much and make only crap. *Green Conversation* is a painting of my actual series SPHERES. Green came in the latest series. I think as a heritage from my working period in the Tuscan AIR of 2008. Green is the color for the mood and space/sphere I'm in nowadays. For me it represents nature, calm, tranquility. But I'm now still working at this series so I'm now discovering what this color means and how it works. Discovering the grammar of green.



**It's clear that concept of landscape plays a crucial role in your artworks: and, since our magazine is called "LandEscape", we cannot do without asking you: what is the significance of the landscape in your art?**

Last ten years I paint panorama's (hard, soft and spheres). Panoramas are subjective views, perceptions of places that surrounds us. Those places can be inner-, outer places, thoughts or cultures.

A PANORAMA is about the perception and experience of their own environment, the sphere.

I've always felt the need, to paint my vision of my environment. I am inspired by the actual (physical / mental) space. The 'hard' panorama is a representation of the physical space and refers to the observable form of city buildings and asphalt. The 'soft' panorama refers to the experience, the subjective experiences and expectations of users of a place.

SPHERES are about the personal view of the inner and outer space of today's western society. What's happening outside and insight. So is the meaning of breathless as well positive as negative. In my commission Connection different clients are sitting on the same bench. Everyone has his own inner and outer sphere. They are a group but also isolated each one from each other. Every person is alone but and absorbing information from the outside world in their own personal inner world. How different can a sphere be, how different the meaning of the atmosphere. It's the color of the atmosphere who defends the meaning of the place, time and expectation. We are defining the atmosphere through our perception, we are making our reality. I work with the power of color, creating a two dimensional space, in which everyone discovers his own personal sphere. The Sphere (company, environment, place, future) is a personal and important place that creates and defines the



**Green conversation 1**

2011/2012, 70x110 cm, mixed on techniqueon linen

*Description: Green Conversation - Every picture is unfinished, an image with drawn elements and color fields. The spectator will finish/complete the panorama with his own perception (personal experience). Each landscape is made of different layers. Together they create a timeless landscape which defines where we are. Here into a green conversation, the image has different representations, of a group (background) and two women (foreground drawing). It's de spectator who chooses what he wants to see, to experience. The spectator eye has to discover this image, it takes a few minutes to see all the layers and to discover what this sphere image is about.*

artists has the guts to discover through the creative process. Just do, just go travel, be adventurous and learn to stay open minded, think out of the box etc. Artists are discovering how images works. I think we humans learns more from images then from rational theories.

**Now here's a cliché question that we often ask to the artists that we happen to interview: what aspect of your work do you enjoy the most? What gives you the biggest satisfaction?**

To be the captain of my own life. I can travel, in my inner and outer world, discovering thing every day things. I feel like I am a kind of Alchemist, magician of colors. I would like to learn people more about art, the power of creating and colors. But it's also very tough, not always enough security about income, exhibitions, but especially strong work! But it's the best job and the best way of life for me!

**Thanks a lot for this interview, Baukje: Anything coming up for you professionally that you would like readers to be aware of?**

I'm now focusing into my series SPHERES. So next year a few solo shows. This year I make a few groupshows in Amsterdam, Soest, Naarden, Milan and London. Last year I had a great commission CONNECTION.

I would like to invite the readers to look at the making off film. I put this on my website [www.spaltro.nl](http://www.spaltro.nl) under projects. Here I worked together with psychiatric clients and workers, we made together a triptych of 1.7 by 7 meters! It was great to do, to feel the synergy it had, and the result is a beautiful art of peace in which more clients are painted on a bench in the Vondelpark. For al interested readers on [www.spaltro.nl](http://www.spaltro.nl) you can follow my activities, see my different series, and different pro-ject+films.

If you mail me at [info@spaltro.nl](mailto:info@spaltro.nl) I'll put you on my mailinglist.

own identity'. In what sphere are you? Through color I catch the different Spheres I notice. In the Sphere I research the tension between the perception of the personal inside and the outside world.

**In your artist's statement you have mentioned a quote of the german philosopher Peter Sloterdijk: "it is not a matter of knowing who you are, but to understand where you are". I'm sort of convinced that some informations are hidden, or even "encrypted" so we need to decipher them. Maybe that one of the roles of an artist could be to reveal unexpected sides of Nature, especially of our inner Nature... what's your point about this?**

It's important to get conscious, to know where you are. What is your own sphere? Through which you perceive the reality. This getting counciuos is a role for artists. Because only