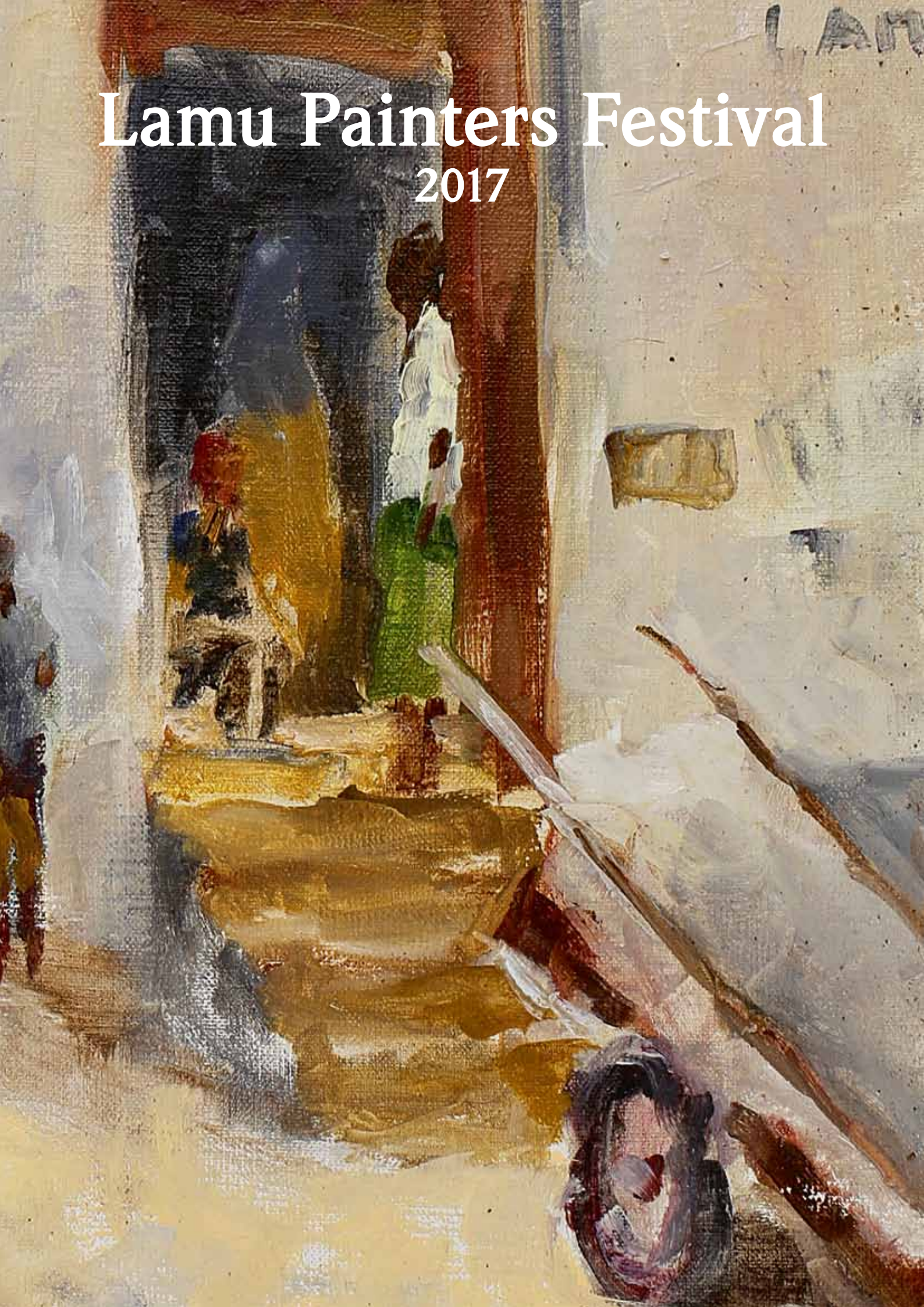


# Lamu Painters Festival

## 2017









# Lamu Landscapes – A Window on Swahili Island Life

Robin Akkerman  
Claire Bianchi  
Frans Bianchi  
Sibylle Bross  
Sonja Brussen  
Natalia Dik  
Ernst Dingemans  
Piet Groenendijk  
Rob Houdijk  
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Irina Melikhova  
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Olga Peshkova  
Marina Rubanova  
Valentin Skachkov  
Diederik Vermeulen  
Karin Voogd

Lamu Painters Festival  
February 6th – 19th, 2017  
[www.lamupaintersfestival.org](http://www.lamupaintersfestival.org)













## Lamu Painters Festival

First held in 2011, the concept of a painting festival was dreamt up by Herbert Menzer, a part-time resident in Shela. Inspired by the light, colours and traditional rhythm of island life, he saw a correlation with the post-impressionist painters. The Lamu Painters Festival is now an established fixture in the Lamu calendar of events. The 2017 festival was the most ambitious to date. 23 figurative artists from Russia, Holland, France and Germany descended on the island for three weeks of intensive painting. All adherents of the 'plein air' discipline - the art of painting outdoors - they soon transformed the streets and alleyways of Shela village and Lamu Town into an al fresco studio. Whilst there were a few new faces, many of the artists were returning for their third or fourth visit.

Part of an archipelago of islands off the Kenyan coast, Lamu is steeped in ancient history. It was once a major port visited by the dhows plying their trade with the aid of the monsoon. The traders and crew settled and intermarried

with the original inhabitants to create the Swahili: a people with their own language and distinct culture. The surviving architecture, craft and customs have more in common with the East than Africa.

Lamu has always been a magnet for artists, photographers, filmmakers, poets and writers. A natural tropical paradise, the vast skies blend with the blue palette of the Indian Ocean. The seemingly endless sandy beach melds into the imposing line of sand dunes dotted with doum palms.

The town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is suffused with the past. Ravaged by the salt air and time, much of the architecture is unchanged from its 18th and 19th Century heyday. Hints of the Chinese, Portuguese and Omani invaders appear in the woodwork and ceramics. The central square, dominated by the Omani Fort is still guarded by two menacing cannon - nowadays a comfortable perch for the Swahili as they congregate after Friday mosque. Part of its magic and charm can be attributed to the lack of cars on the is-



land. Aside from the District Commissioner landrover and a couple of tractors, the narrow streets can only be accessed by foot or by donkey. All other travel is dependent on the boats of all shapes and sizes – from the lumbering ‘Jahazi’ and the smaller ‘Mashua’ fishing dhows with their lateen sails to the engine-powered wooden boats and fiberglass ‘mtaboati’.

As the whiff of linseed oil and turpentine permeated the air, the artists battled with the elements as they endeavoured to create their impression of the landscape and the people. The strong Kaskazi wind brought a welcome relief from the relentless tropical heat but wrecked havoc with the canvases and flimsy easels.

The Lamuans and Shela residents are used to this biannual artistic invasion but never failed to stop and talk to the painters. Their openness and courtesy made a huge impact with all the artists. In the ensuing interviews, they all mentioned the Swahili hospitality and friendliness.

The hotel Batil Aman, a former Swahili palace became the headquarters. The painters quickly established an evening routine. Pre-dinner, they congregated in the improvised gallery showing the 300 plus paintings, critiquing each other’s work, sharing experiences and advice before sitting down to feasts cooked by Herbert’s team of untiring staff.

As well as painting in Lamu Town, a number of excursions were organised, including a visit to the once famous dhow-building town of Matandoni. Now a humble cluster of huts, it was a shock to many of the artists who had never been subjected to this level of poverty before. The warmth of the welcome by the Matandoni residents playing home-fashioned musical instruments, singing and dancing was a memorable occasion. An impromptu trip was undertaken to the deserted ruins of 18th Century Takwa. The artists also visited Maweni on Manda Island, the centre of the stone quarrying industry. The coral rag was quarried and shaped by hand before being carried down to the waiting dhows. It is harsh existence and one artist described it as a circle in Dante’s inferno. In comparison, an afternoon painting children’s portraits at Anidan orphanage was a joyous occasion.

The stay concluded with hectic weekend of activities. Merging with the Lamu Art Festival, the artists were invited to a live concert of Kenyan music in the Lamu Square, the art exhibition in the Fort and a musical sundowner dhow trip to Manda. The festivities ended in a highly competitive dhow race involving the Lamuan and Shela communities.







△ Rob Houdijk    ▽ Maria Kolyanova





## Anidan Orphanage

A short distance from Lamu town and burrowed down a sandy alleyway is the large compound that houses Anidan orphanage. Simple yet conveying a joyful atmosphere, it exudes a spiritual, monastic feel. Fruit-laden mango trees dot the feet-scorching sandy play area. A state of the art basketball court has pride of place among the makuti-roofed classrooms and houses. In one corner a well-equipped hospital provides pediatric medical care across the island.

Offering a shelter to 250 children, Anidan is a Spanish-run organisation reliant on the generosity of donor funding. The trustees are committed to give their wards a good education. Recognising the importance of art on the children, Anidan has always welcomed the Lamu Painters Festival artists.

The art department is full of the children's own work. Some of the budding artists have won prestigious international art prizes. Posing for their portraits, trying to sit still, the orphans instantly connected with the artists as they chatted away. Their innocent charm broke down any cultural or language barriers. It is hard to believe that these smiling, giggly, wide-eyed children were the victims of poverty, malnourishment and sometimes abuse.

Anidan has become famous for its drummers. Using kanga-embellished Brazilian samba drums, the drumming troupes practice incessantly – beating out a magnetic rhythm as they dance in unison. A trip to Anidan orphanage is an unforgettable and moving experience.



Tatiana Lushnikova



◁ Natalia Dik    △ Marjolein Menke    ▽ Irina Melikhova







Robin Akkerman  
(1952, Netherlands)



Maasai. Oil on canvas, 90 x 50 cm

Never ones to mind their own business, the Lamuans were fascinated by the painters' first trip to paint in Lamu. They soon attached themselves to the dozen artists scattered around Lamu Town Square. Robin, in particular, became the unwitting centre of attention. He was quickly inundated by hordes of children who crowded around his easel. Inquisitive and questioning, they watched his every brush stroke. It was only a matter of time before Robin had surrendered his paintbrush, and reverting to his former career as a teacher, patiently conducted an impromptu art class. Generously allowing the children to paint on his personal canvas, he quietly instructed them on the art of mixing paint. As word spread, the other painters surrendered their half-finished colour palettes and the event turned into one of those moments that make the Lamu Painters Festival so unforgettable.

Robin originally trained as a psychologist and became a professor of psychol-

ogy at the University of Leiden. Unquestionably a natural teacher, Robin gravitated towards teaching art, before taking up painting full time over a decade ago. Initially inspired by the German Expressionists and French Fauvism movement, he also cites Andre Derain, Vincent van Gogh and Kees van Dongen as influences on his work. Robin's colourful paintings resonated with clarity and bold lines. The clean light of Lamu clearly suited his usual bright palette. A frequent participant in European painting festivals, Robin says that his stay in Lamu was the most impressive. "Every day was special and full of meaning – I will remember my stay in Lamu as a miracle."

Robin obviously relished his time on the island. An aficionado of Cuban and African music, he was the first one on the dance floor at the various parties and live concerts that contributed to the amazing atmosphere of the 2017 Lamu Painters Festival.





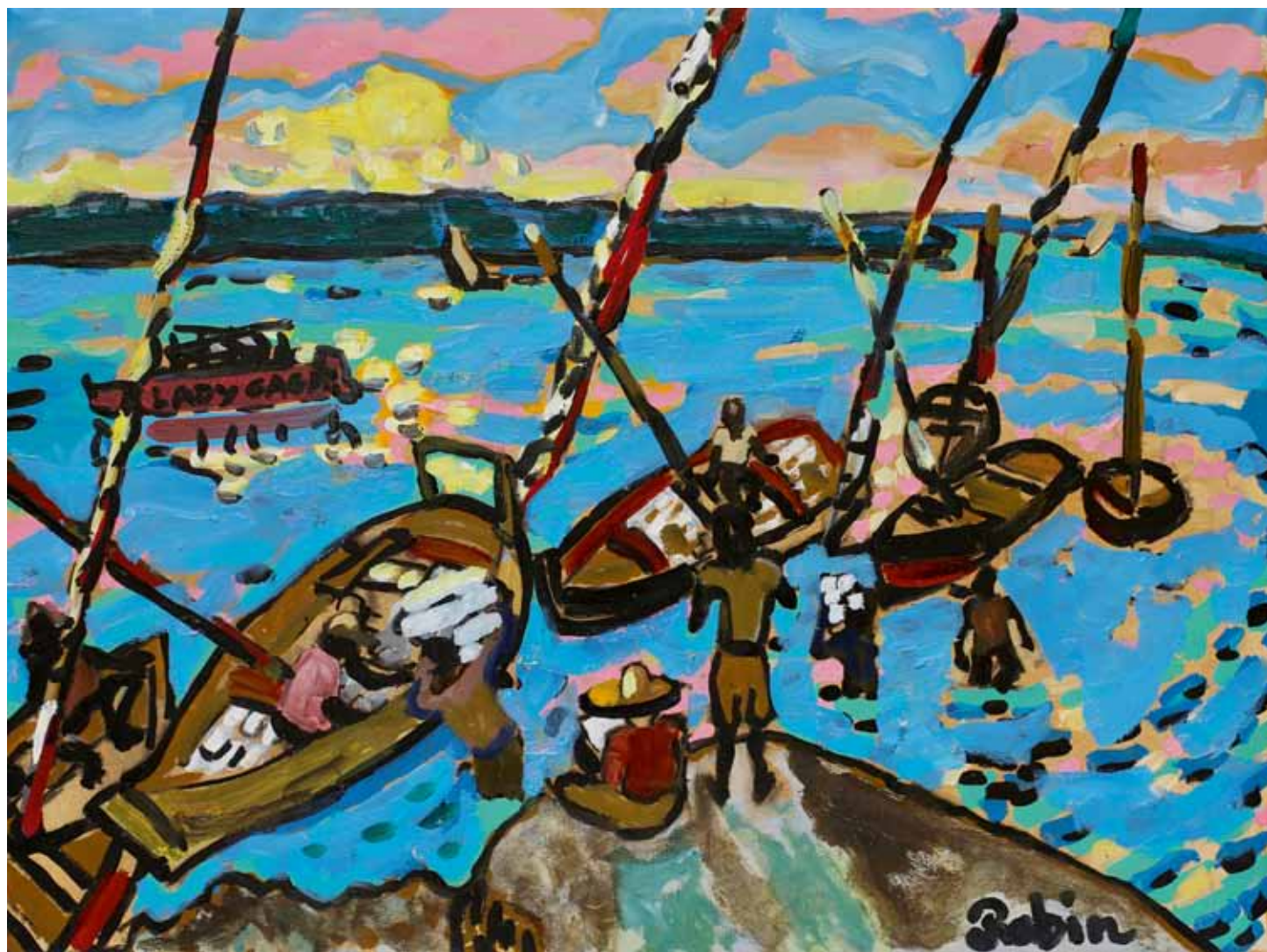
Lamu Fort. Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 cm





Pink Cart. Oil on canvas, 50 x 65 cm





Maweni. Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 cm



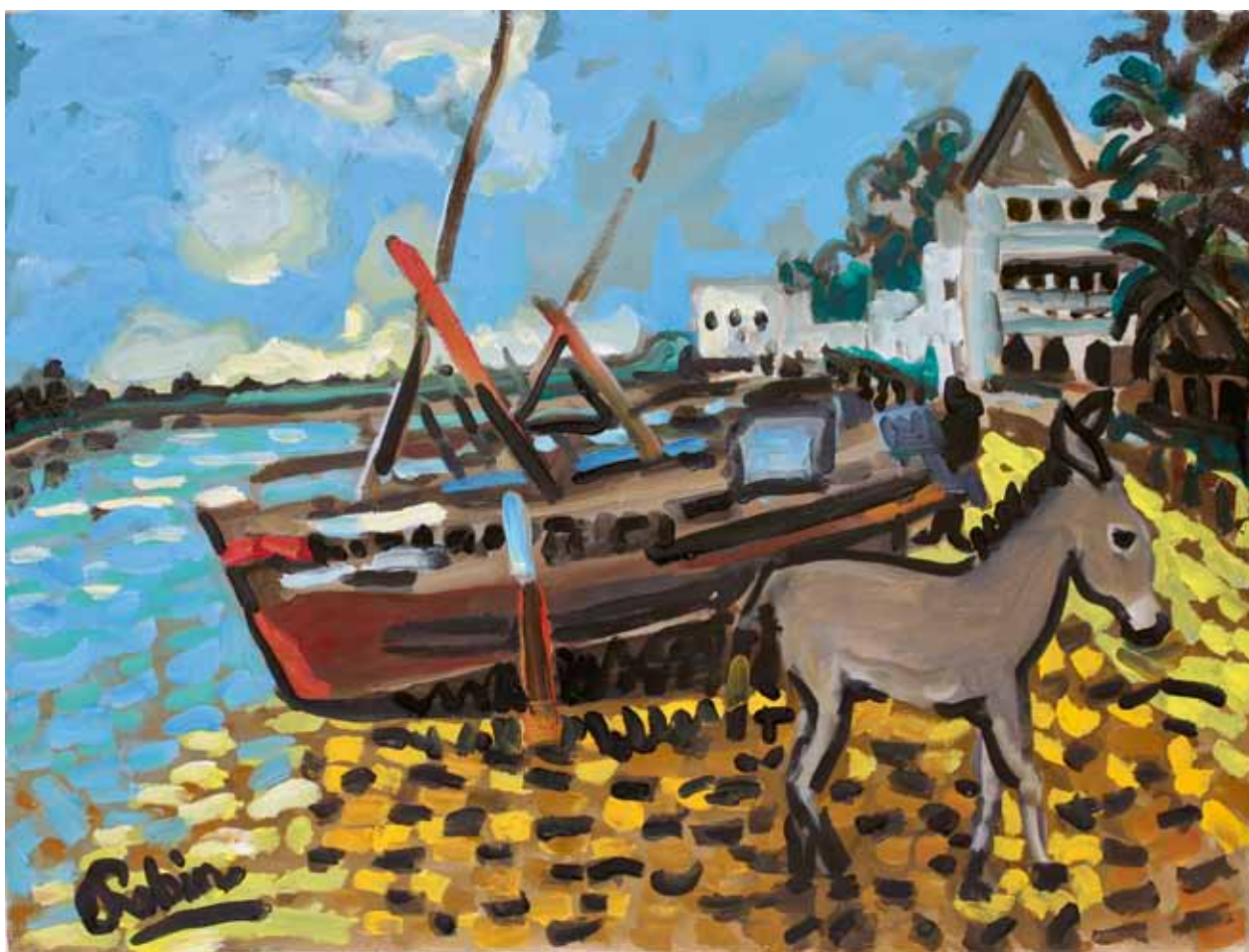


The Shadow. Oil on canvas, 45 x 90 cm





△ The Sun. Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 cm    ▽ Donkey at Fishermen Beach. Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 cm







## Claire Bianchi (1963, France)

Fascinated by reflections on water, Claire is usually focused on painting the ponds around her home in Fountainbleu outside Paris. This was her first trip to Lamu. It was a revelation, and she found herself challenged by the vibrant colours and the huge variety of subject matter. Of her first visit



Les Jardins de Shela. Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm

to Lamu Town, she laughs as she says “I was so busy looking at all the potential things to paint, I didn’t realise I had stepped in a pile of donkey poo!” After a career in graphic design in Paris, Claire moved to Fountainbleu after the birth of her third child. She discovered her ability to teach and opened a flourishing art workshop for students. During her stay in Lamu, Claire always maintained an innate French elegance, despite the humidity. She did admit that she initially felt out of her comfort zone and says, “Lamu came as a big shock to me.” She initially found it a challenge to paint as part of a group. Once she became familiar with the artistic community, she found it to be a refreshing atmosphere. She says that she learnt a great deal from her fellow artists, especially Natalia Dik. Her trip clearly inspired her work.

“You can paint things here that you will never be able to paint again,” she says, “and the people were so great to draw, and the colours were incredible.” Like many of the other artists, she was surprised by the attitude of the local villagers: “they were so kind-hearted and lively.”

As well her prowess in using oils on canvas, Claire produced a series of watercolour and pencil sketches that illustrate her background in graphic design and a strong confidence in her use of colour.

It seems as though Claire was always painting. She kept a private sketchbook, documenting her time on the island. Exquisite watercolour sketches complete with notes encapsulate a particular moment in time in the way a photograph never can.





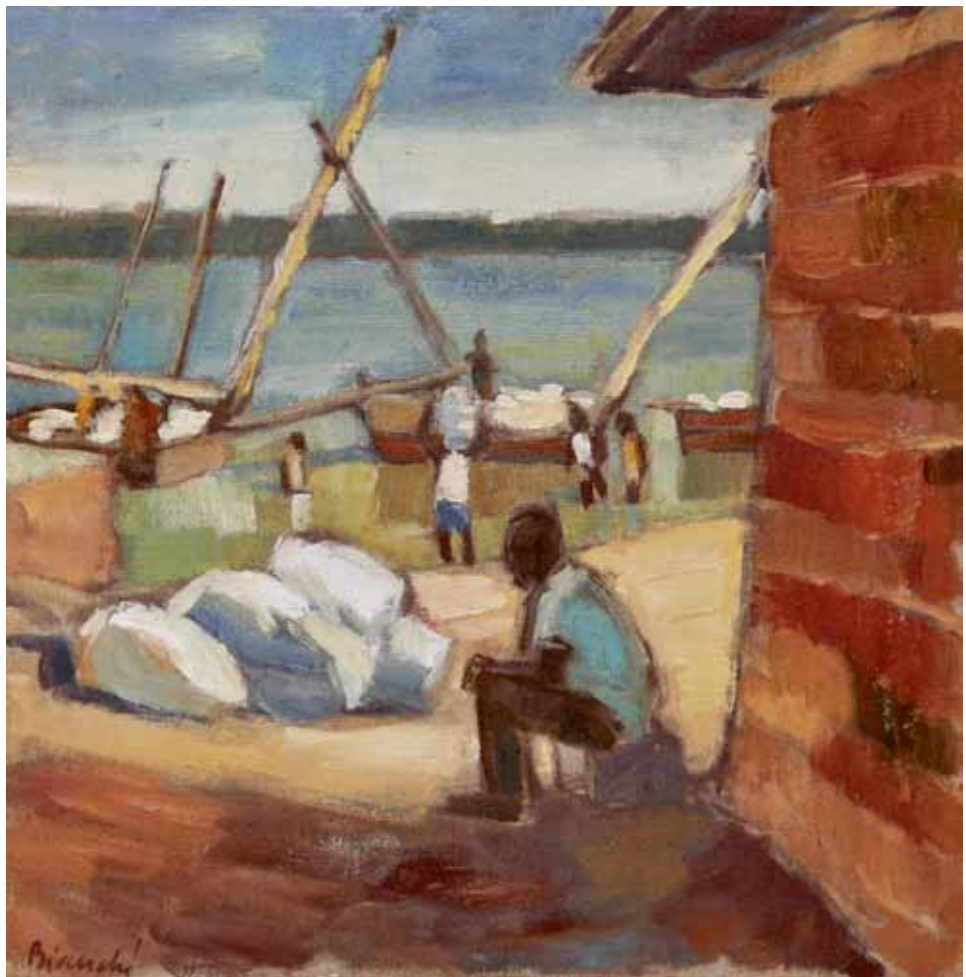
Le Petite Homme Orange. Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm





Beaucoup de Monde Sur la Jetee. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm





Maweni, L'Attente.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 40 cm



La Poussiere de Manda.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 40 cm





Dans Les Jardins de Peponi. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm





Les Barques a Matondoni.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 60 cm



À dos d'homme.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 40 cm





Frans Bianchi  
(1951, Netherlands)



Catch of the Day Peponi's. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm

It was intriguing to watch how the figurative artists painted their individual interpretation of the same scenery. With his primal colour palette and sharp outlines, Frans Bianchi's output was by far the boldest. An adherent of the French School of Expressionism, Frans is also a follower of the Fauvist movement. Jason Berger (1924 – 2010), a prominent American 'plein air' artist was a close friend and mentor. He says "Jason changed my life, he taught me how to paint, and his philosophy about art resonated with me."

Frans still carries himself with the deportment of his earlier life in Drug Enforcement. Always cheerful, he regaled his audience with stories of his previous career working in Holland's insalubrious underbelly. His joyful optimism and humour reverberate through his art. He says he can never be too serious about his work. "It should always be a combination of hard work and good fun." He explains how, while painting in Lamu Square,

he was inspired to include the word 'paradise' on the green walls of the kiosk – as that was how he felt at that moment.

He admits that people are sometimes overwhelmed by his fauvist interpretation, but he says that it is much more important to be himself in his painting rather than make a pretty piece of art. "In my opinion, it is very important to make choices. First I think about what pleases me and then how can I show that to the outside world." Frans is a confident, driven painter. With an innate instinct for composition, he describes his style as on the edge of abstract and figurative.

A devotee of painting en 'plein air', Lamu simply suited Frans' artistic approach. He was comfortable painting the bustling beach full of boats and obviously loved the hustle and bustle of Lamu Town. His canvases, filled with vibrant shapes delineated in a bold outline, were a striking addition to the walls of Baitil Aman.





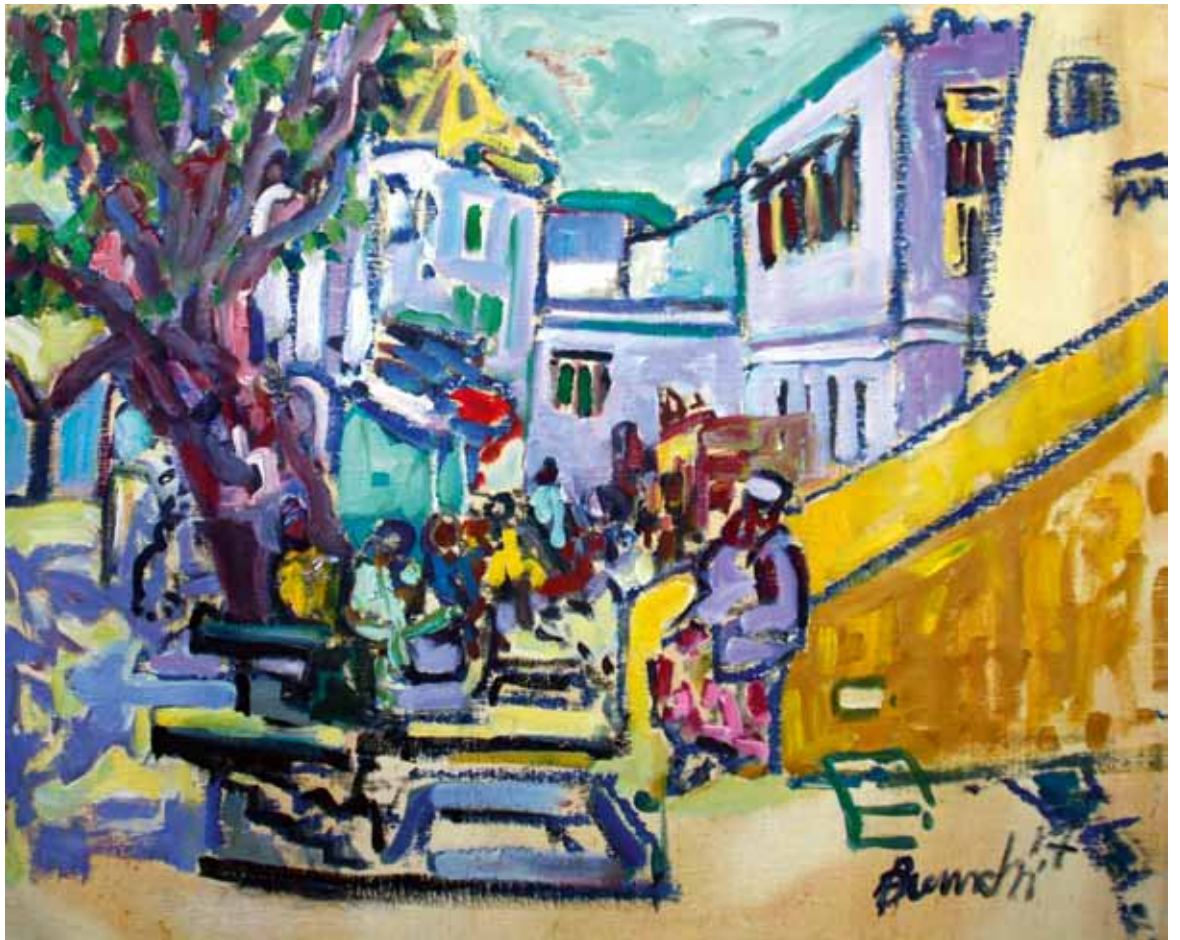
Near Peponi's. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm



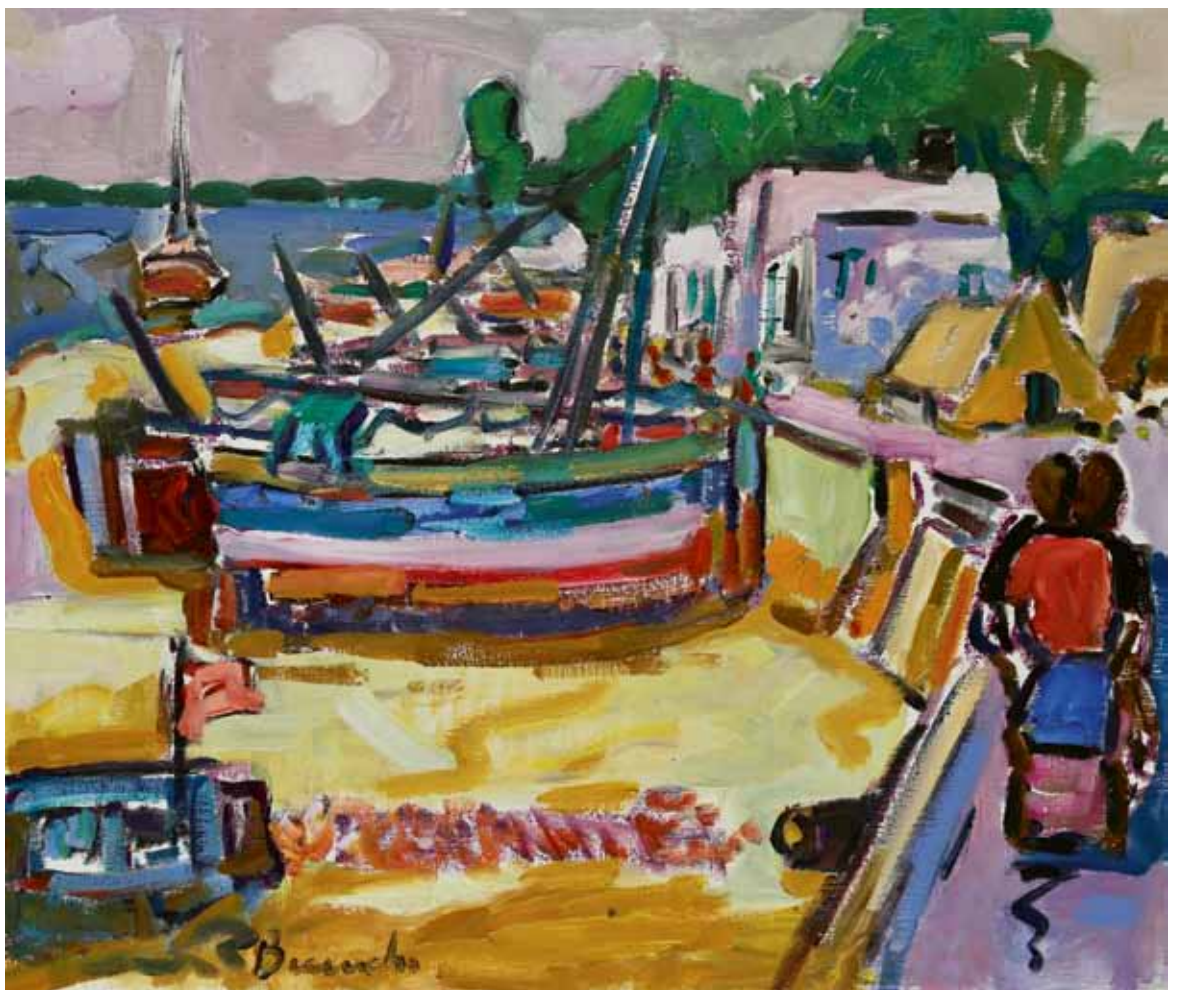


Maweni Dhow. Oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm





Lamu Town Square.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm



Lamu Town Harbour.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm





Streetscene Lamu Town. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm



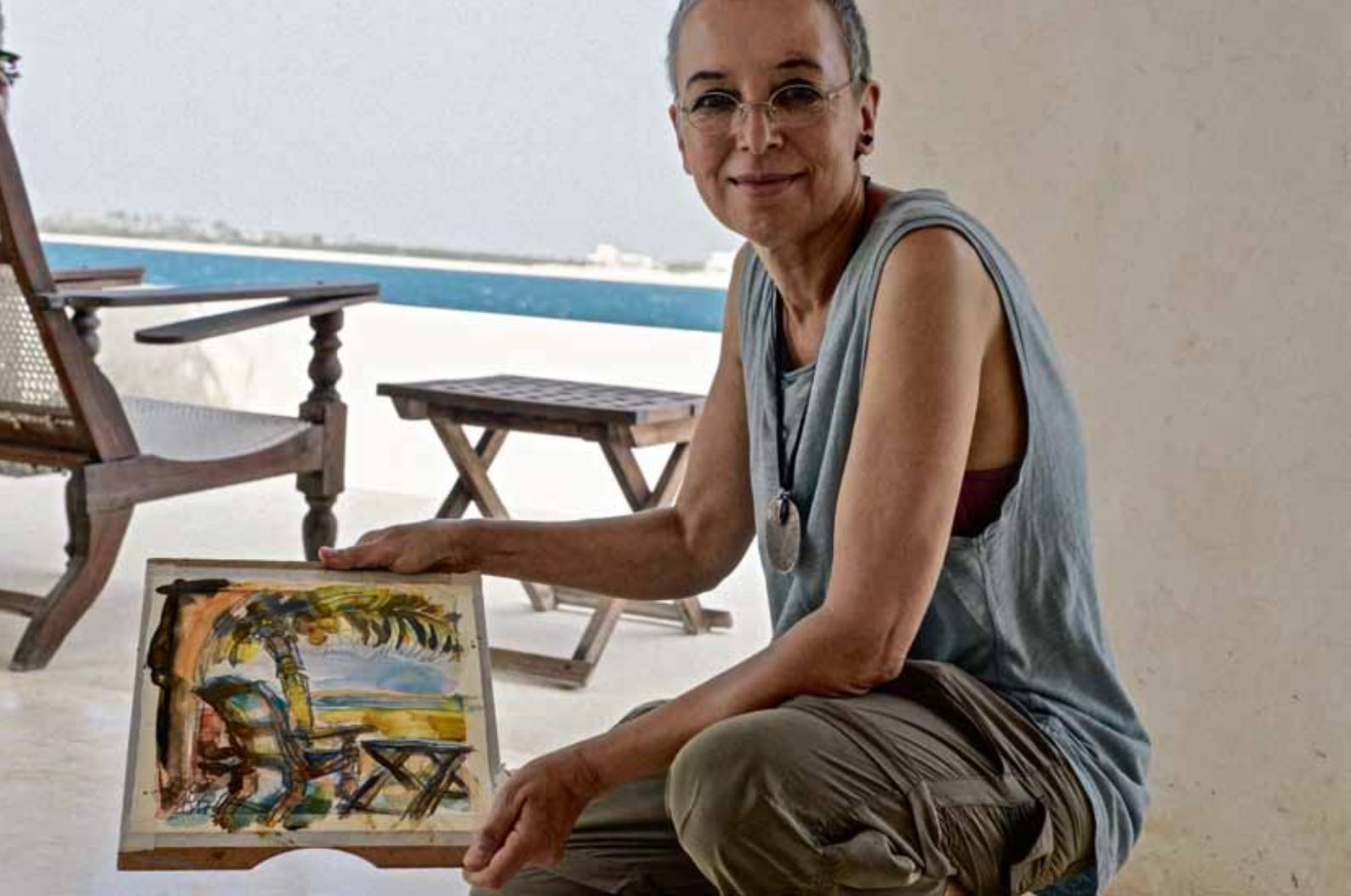


Peponi Jetty.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm



Dhow Yard Matondoni.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm





**Sibylle Bross**  
(1959, Germany)



Bougainvillea Bed. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

Sibylle professed a preference for painting people and the human form. However, during her stay in Lamu, Sybille produced a series of evocative oil depicting the overlooked corners of Shela life. Her selection of vistas ranged from the view looking out from Peponi Hotel to the swimming pool at Jannatan Hotel. In each place, she boldly captured the light and vibrant atmosphere. Her vivid depiction of the shady pergola at Banana House had a rapturous reception from the owner, Captain Banana.

Sibylle's distinctively rich paint palette and broad impressionist brush strokes succinctly captured the tropical heat and prettier aspects of the Island. She said that she found her paintings to be more colourful under the African sun and they seemed to dictate a looser style. Instinctively drawn to the more attractive elements of Lamu, she managed to create as she says, "a syntax of what I see guided by the rhythm of the movement."

Brought up in an artistic family and passionate about her painting, Sybille has had a long career in the fine arts that included three years studying at the Beaux Arts in Paris. As well as painting, she has also designed and created her own jewellery.

A second-time participant in the Lamu Painter's Festival, Sybille fitted right into the island vibe with her African-inspired cap and unconventional funky outfits. Her familiarity with the occasionally erratic tempo of daily life during the three-week stay made her a great help to the Festival organisers. She offered to take on the daunting task supervising the final hanging of the ever-expanding exhibition of the 'plein air' artists. This improvised gallery in Baitil Aman soon became a popular attraction for tourists and locals alike.





Peponi Bar in the Morning. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm



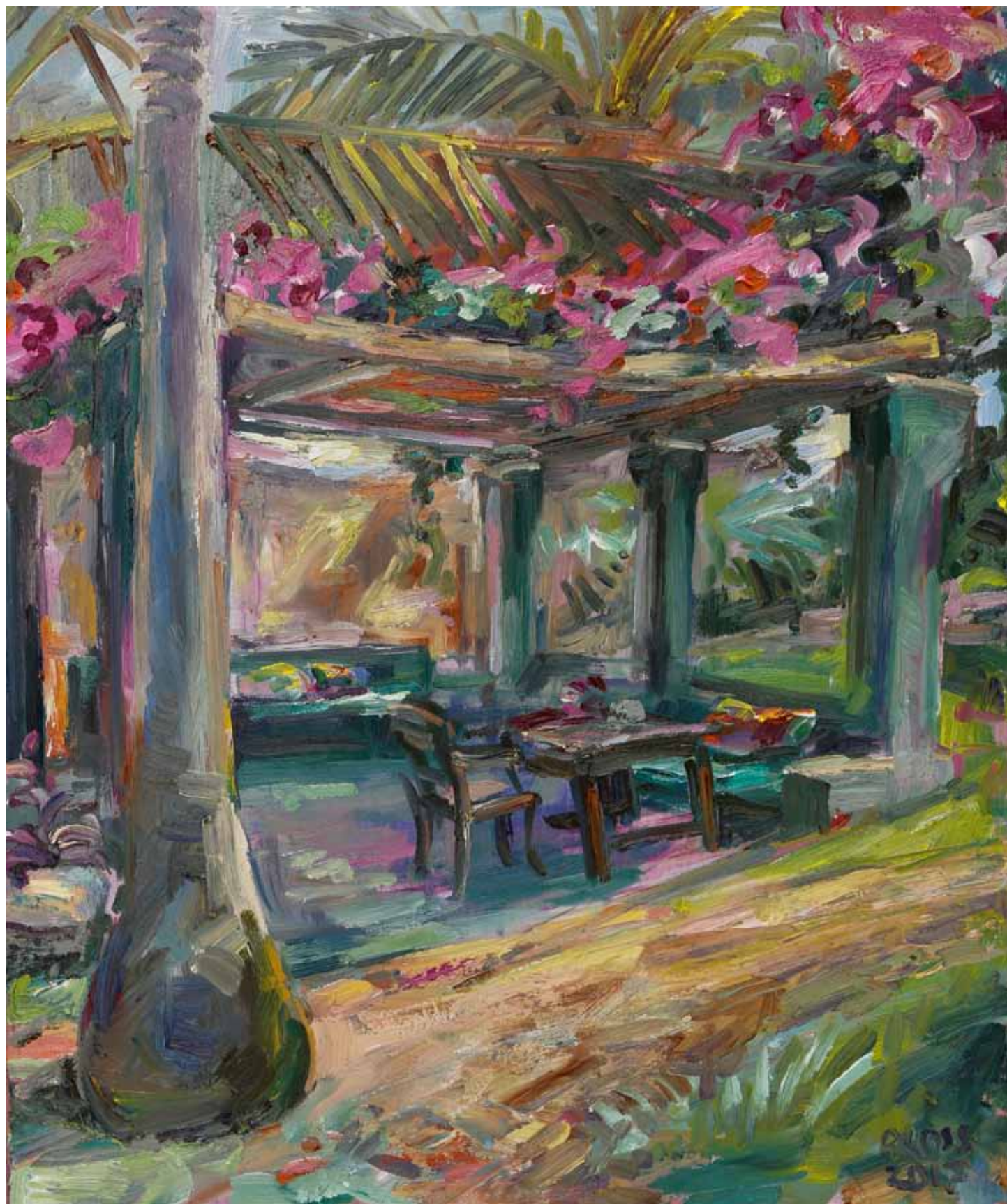


Jannatan Pool. Oil on canvas, 50 x 20 cm



Ali Samosa. Oil on canvas, 50 x 20 cm





Banana House. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm





Ship Builders. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm





In the Shadows. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm













## Sonja Brussen (1974, Netherlands)

Sonja laughs, “this trip feels like a dream; I think I need to pinch myself that it’s real.” Sonja relished the opportunity to paint on Lamu. A professional ‘plein air’ artist, Sonja is used to painting in the wintry conditions of her beloved Netherlands. “I have a great studio, but I need to paint in nature and in particular, I love the sea and the ever changing mood of the clouds,” Sonja says. “I have always been a painter – it’s a rhythm. I like to work in bold brush strokes.”

She became a familiar sight painting on the beach alongside her husband and fellow participant, Ernst Dingemans. She admits she was in her element capturing the vast skies and seascapes. She instantly fell in love with the clarity and lustre of the light. However, the first painting she produced was a Lamu street scene that demonstrated her ease with perspective, love of colour and a light touch.

Like many of the other first time painters, Sonja had mixed impressions of



Friend. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm

Lamu. She says that the village excursions fitted in with her perception of Africa. Matondoni, in particular, struck a chord with her. She remarks, “it was so poor, but yet the people were dancing in our honour.” However, she found there was a vast gulf in the lifestyle in Shela village: “I would

call it ‘almost’ paradise, but there is such a great discrepancy between the wealthy and the suffering of the local people.”

She admits that she doesn’t like to overthink what she is painting and it is mainly instinctive. She surprised herself during her trip to Maweni. She explains, “I did a painting of a caged donkey and a free donkey. I didn’t mean to, but later I saw the symbolism of the free and the unfree. I prefer empty landscapes and capturing the space, but then I suddenly painted a donkey!”

Like many others, she enjoyed the camaraderie of the Painter’s Festival. “I love being immersed in the artistic community: the swapping of tips, tricks and the general stimulation.”





Shela Beach. Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 cm





Peponi Beach. Oil on canvas, 50 x 120 cm





Alone in Lamu. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm





Flower Power.  
Oil on canvas,  
60 x 50 cm



Empty Fridge.  
Oil on canvas,  
30 x 30 cm





△ Shela Fishermen's Beach. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm    ▽ Two Friends. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm







**Natalia Dik**  
(1961, Russia)



Sara. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

A genuine 'artist's artist', Natalia was highly respected by the other 'plein air' participants. Her name continually popped up during conversation as an inspiration to the others. Modest about her own prodigious talent, Natalia was the ideal guide with whom to view the overflowing exhibition space in Baitil Aman. Highly knowledgeable about art theory and history, she was always generous with her critiquing. Examining the works through her eyes and hearing her evaluation gave many of the pieces on display a much deeper context.

A regular member of the Painters Festival, Natalia first visited Lamu in 2011. During her return visits, her English has improved enough to forgo a translator, and she managed to convey her enthusiasm and excitement about her 2017 stay. She said that she could feel her palette changing – becoming lighter and warmer. "Being here makes me feel like a child again. I have regained that childish delight in seeing how the sky joins the horizon."

Painting en 'plein air' is important to her. She loves the challenge of the constantly changing light and shadow, capturing those instantaneous emotions and painting the natural world. She says that the enclosed atmosphere of a studio makes her look inward. She feels that Lamu is a bridge between Africa and Europe that fuses together on this tiny island.

The enjoyment of a challenge seems to be a theme in Natalia's artistic career. She mentions that she only began after a friend said she couldn't paint "and I was so furious that I started." By the age of thirteen, she knew that art was her future.

Natalia also bridged the two elements of this year's festival. As well as painting 'plein air', she worked on a grand-scale series of five pieces for the main exhibition in the Fort. Inspired by the elements, she produced transfixing canvases that depicted man, earth, fire, wind, and air using Lamu scenes as inspiration.





Road to the Sea. Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm





Mosque in Takwa Ruins.  
Oil on canvas,  
45 x 45 cm



Baobab on Manda.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 50 cm





Maweni Hotel. Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm





Matondoni Morning. Oil on canvas, 30 x 55 cm





Baitil Aman Garden. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm





## Ernst Dingemans (1941, Netherlands)

Ernst Dingeman's quiet reticence concealed a wry sense of humour. Unlike many of the artists, who gave their work a simple name, Ernst's titles included "Dreaming of a White Christmas" or "Matondoni Lonesome Loo". Often found painting in quiet companionship with his wife, Sonja, their artistic styles were polar opposites. Ernst's world is depicted in an organised, linear perspective. In one of his paintings, a big expanse of blue skies merges into the yellow sands. Peering over the harsh grey jetty sits a figure, dressed in white. Ernst has managed to inject a sense of mystery into his stark composition. What is the person looking at so intently? What is he thinking? It is an intriguing piece of work.

Ernst seemed a little uncomfortable talking about himself. Is he bashful when he recounts, that growing up, his brothers were much better drafts-



3 Donkeys. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 cm

men than him? Ernst had a career in the 'real world' before he took up painting full time. His creative journey also included jewellery making, sculpture, ceramics and photography. As he

says, "I like making things - either a painting, a sculpture, or a piece of furniture. It is not only art - I get great satisfaction from craftsmanship."

Ernst said that Lamu was very different from his expectations: "I expected Africa, but I see parts that are Middle Eastern." He admitted that he struggled to find a connection between himself and his painting. He felt that as an outsider, it was a challenge, not to paint a 'chocolate box' pastiche. Making a connection is an important part of his approach to producing a good painting, especially in portraiture. "I need to have a bond with the person I am painting. It is my fault that I can't make this connection."

Asked how he would he talk about his time in Lamu to friends back in Holland, is Ernst being deadpan when he answers "it has been quite an experience. I am not a simple person, and I cannot give a simple answer."





Dreaming of a White Christmas. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 cm





The Beacon and the Hound. Acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm





△ Matondoni Lonesome Loo. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 50 cm    ▽ Up and Below. Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 cm







Piet Groenendijk  
(1949, Netherlands)



Maweni Girl Helen. Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 cm

One of the Lamu Painter Festival 'regulars' (this was his fifth visit to Lamu), Piet has only recently taken up painting as a full-time occupation. Despite his yearning to train as an artist from the age of 19, he followed his brother's practical advice and became a doctor. However, during his years of practising medicine, he continued to paint when he could.

Inspired by the 19th Century painters, Piet admires the lyricism of Corot in particular. He tries to incorporate the same poetic approach in his work. "I find my mood influences my work – when I'm happy the piece doesn't come together as well as when I am in a melancholy mood." He candidly admits that it has been a struggle to capture the poetic atmosphere in his Lamu paintings. "It is much easier to paint the Dutch landscape as I have such a deep connection there."

Piet has travelled extensively but had little interest in Africa until his invitation to the first Lamu Painters Festival. It was a revelation to him, and he was

overwhelmed by the experience and the kindness and spontaneity of the locals in particular. This stay, he focused on capturing this spirit in his paintings. Abandoning the comfort of painting empty landscapes, he filled his paintings with people. Fascinated by the colourful clothing, he confesses that replicating skin colour was a challenge. It also leads to problems with composition but overall "I am satisfied with what I have made."

Lamu Square was one of his favourite places as it was always full of movement and people. He enjoyed painting with the other artists and was always curious to see the different interpretations of the same scene. The 'salon' atmosphere of Baitil Aman, discussing and critiquing each other's work was a fruitful and enjoyable experience, and he learnt a lot of technical tips. He says that he is painting much lighter as a result.

His lasting experience of Lamu will be the people. "They have little money, but they laugh a lot – in Holland, they have money but don't laugh!"





No Smoking. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm





Veiled. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm





Reading Material. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm





Lamu County. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm





Low Tide to Lamu. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm





## Rob Houdijk (1950, Netherlands)

A well-respected artist in his native Holland, Rob Houdijk was profuse in his praise of the Lamu Painters Festival. "It is fantastic and has exceeded even my very high expectations." He admits he had a few misgivings about painting in a group, but he found the experience an eye-opener. "It's a great atmosphere. There is genuine enthusiasm and such nice people." A discussion with a fellow artist has given him a new insight into own style. He recognised how, in painting fidgety young children, he had developed a signature technique similar to "a handwriting that is now such an intuitive part of me. It now crops up in all my work." Citing the inspiring colours and subject matter, Rob credits Lamu with giving his painting, what he terms, 'a much-needed boost'. "I must continue in this style when I get home," he says. He claims that drawing is the absolute basis of everything he does, but he is passionate about painting outdoors. "While I do a little touch up later, I try

to catch as much as possible in a couple of strokes." He eschews the use of a camera for his sketchbook. Looking across his easel to the scene in front of him, he describes the how the falling drops of light is a sight that has to be



In Maweni. Oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm

experienced rather than reviewed in a photo.

Expounding on his enjoyment of his Lamu sojourn, he found himself moved by the hospitality and friendliness. He says he surprised himself with the beauty he saw in the deep poverty of Matondoni village. He found the experience both moving and disturbing. He says "this is beauty – the poor homes are inspiring, but we are outsiders who see it from another perspective. I hope I am doing it justice."

Rob showed a patient, gentle side in painting portraits at Anidan Orphanage. In spite of the language barrier, he confidently chatted away to his young subjects. "I tried to capture their friendliness, and they were a revelation – so different from their peers in the Western World!" Rob goes back to Holland with an extensive collection of Lamu paintings and a folio of sketches that he intends to use as inspiration for a series of sculptures.





In Maweni. Oil on canvas, 51 x 51 cm





Shela Beach. Oil on canvas, 51 x 51 cm





△ In Lamu Town. Oil on canvas, 47 x 60 cm    ▽ Lamu Harbour. Oil on canvas, 30 x 50 cm







Lamu Pier. Oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm





△ In Lamu Town. Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 cm    ▽ In Maweni. Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 cm







## Machtelt Ijdo (1965, Netherlands)

Machtelt was initially anxious about her trip to Lamu. She had read and been warned about the dangers of visiting Africa. Any fears soon dissipated with the warm welcome and open



Shela Beach I. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm

friendliness of the locals. She found she settled straight into the simple Island lifestyle, "It was hot, but I loved how we only travelled by foot or by boat... walking barefoot in the sand... in a way, it felt like coming home."

Relishing the warm Lamu light, Machtelt was astounded by the wealth of subject matter from which to choose. Normally focused on composition, perspective and her palette, she found herself drawn to painting the Lamu faces. She enjoyed capturing, as she says "their personalities, open expressions and the feeling of living in the here and now." In particular, the animated village children were a source of inspiration. In spite of the cultural and linguistic differences, she says she was touched by the "connection they made with her."

Raised in the Netherlands, Machtelt lives by in the sea in Noorhout. Despite showing an artistic talent as a child, her father dissuaded her from a career in art. She instead studied for a degree in agriculture. She has managed to meld her agricultural background with her art through her love of painting small farms.

A sense of her farming sensibilities shines through the paintings she made

on Maweni. She says she was struck by the hues of the sandy soil and the severe manual labour endured by the stone workers. Influenced by the spontaneity of the Dutch artist, Hans Baayens, she strives to simplify her work to an almost abstract style.

Like many of the other artists, her stay on Lamu was enriched by her immersion in an artistic community. Machtelt remarks that she gleaned so much from watching the other painters work and how everyone shared their ideas and techniques. The Lamu Painters Festival exceeded all her expectations. As well as being so well looked after and the kindness shown to her, "It was much more than just an experience, I found myself humbled by the religion, race and tolerance."





The Old Tree. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm





Maweni Hotel. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm





Shela Beach II. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm





Hanging Out. Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm





△ Shela Beach III. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm    ▽ Lamu Harbour. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm







**Rob Jacobs**  
(1960, Netherlands)

Crowds of visitors and villagers milled around on Peponi beach under the relentless heat of the midday sun to watch the dhow race. Despite the throbbing music and the mounting excitement of the impending event, Rob Jacobs was part of the main attraction as he peered at his easel. He seemed to effortlessly capture the movement, light and composition of the dhows lined up in front of him. Oblivious to all the attention he was getting, Rob stood knee-deep in watery shallows, a line of paintbrushes planted in the sand and painted away as though his life depended on it.

During his three weeks on Lamu Island, Rob's output was prolific. Dressed in his painting attire of singlet, flowery shorts and jaunty Panama, he seemed to be planted around every corner of Shela's maze of pathways. No subject escaped his notice and as the days passed his canvases increased in size and ambition. The sight of Rob returning from another excursion became

as familiar as the muezzin calling the faithful to evening prayer. Struggling back with another freshly painted canvas, he battled through the narrow streets avoiding passing pedestrians, inquisitive donkeys and the pernicious wind.

To say that Rob is an artist who enjoys painting 'plein air' is an understatement. He is a dedicated disciple of the movement and an admirer of the early 19th Century artists. Liberated from their studios by the invention of the paint tube, they embraced the challenges of painting outdoors. When asked what he liked about painting in Lamu, he says he was "inspired by the simplicity of the light, the love and warmth of the people." Light is a very important aspect of his art. He appreciates that the very essence of painting outdoors is the task of capturing the light in that fleeting moment. He draws inspiration from Russian painters who he believes are virtuosos in their handling of light.

Trained as an architect, Rob discovered a love of painting in his third year of studies. He was encouraged to pursue his passion by one of his teachers and has combined both ever since. He often mentioned how grateful he was for the opportunity to paint in Lamu. In particular, he relished the impromptu evenings at the ever-growing communal gallery in Baitil Aman, where the figurative artists gathered to inspect the day's output. He found himself inspired by the diversity of the other artists and enjoyed the crossover of ideas. More than anything, he was struck by the attitude of the local Shela villagers and how genuine they appeared. "Always cheerful and full of joy, they don't seem to judge which is something I will miss when I return to the Western world." His remark embodies the very aim of the 2017 painting festival – to be a "bridge between East and West."





Shela Lamu  
Oil on canvas,  
140 x 80 cm





△ Peponi Beach. Oil on canvas board, 60 x 80 cm    ▽ Maweni Hotel. Oil on canvas board, 80 x 60 cm







Sea Suq Restarant.  
Oil on canvas board,  
60 x 50 cm



Corner Sea Suq.  
Oil on canvas board,  
40 x 40 cm



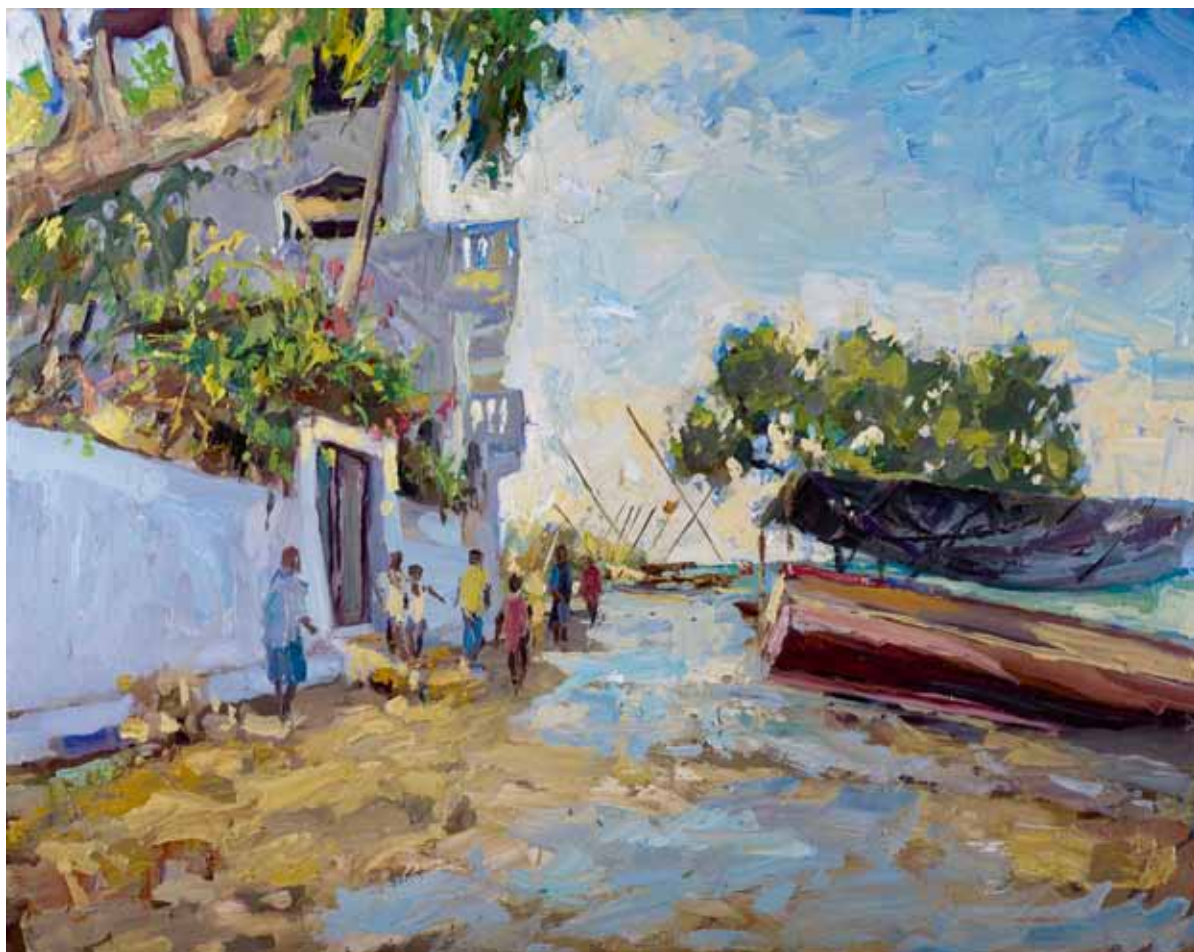


Entrance Hotel Jannatan (Ali).  
Oil on canvas board,  
60 x 50 cm



Sitting Under Tree.  
Oil on canvas board,  
40 x 40 cm





Kijani Beach.  
Oil on canvas,  
80 x 140 cm



Baitil Aman  
Garden.  
Oil on canvas,  
120 x 120 cm













Manja Jordans  
(Netherlands)



Coconuts. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm

"I love a challenge," Manja says. "I live by my mantra - just to get on and do it." Quietly determined, Manja has lived a fulfilling and exciting life. Her former career, making documentaries for Dutch radio and television, was filled with adventurous travel. Fluent in several languages, she has crisscrossed the world for her work. "I have always been a curious person. I like to have conversations in the street. I never get tired of it."

This sense of adventure comes to light when she explains her connection to Africa. Having fallen in love with the sound of the Malian Harp-Lute, she took herself off to Bamako to learn how to play the music. For the next eight years, despite people questioning her sanity, she returned to Mali on a regular basis. Living with her teachers and their families, she immersed herself in the culture. "Being in Africa, surrounded by the people and this lovely music – what more could you want?" she says.

Manja had made an impromptu trip to Lamu twenty years before this visit after filming a documentary in Uganda. In her eloquent English, she explains

her attraction: "It was so small then, not so crowded as it is now. My favourite subject is the cross-cultural tradition – Indian, Somali, Kenyan. It is so British here too and they speak such good English - I love it. I love the faces. It's too bad I am not a portrait painter... yet!"

She only started painting after leaving Mali. With her love of a challenge, she took herself off to art school where she was the oldest student. "I felt a little embarrassed, but I wanted to learn." She candidly admits that she is not technically the best artist in the Festival. However, her most recent Lamu works struck a chord with Natalia Dik who pointed out their energy and honesty.

"I can't stop looking at everything: the water, the people, the boats. I don't care what comes out – I just want to paint it."





Drying. Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm





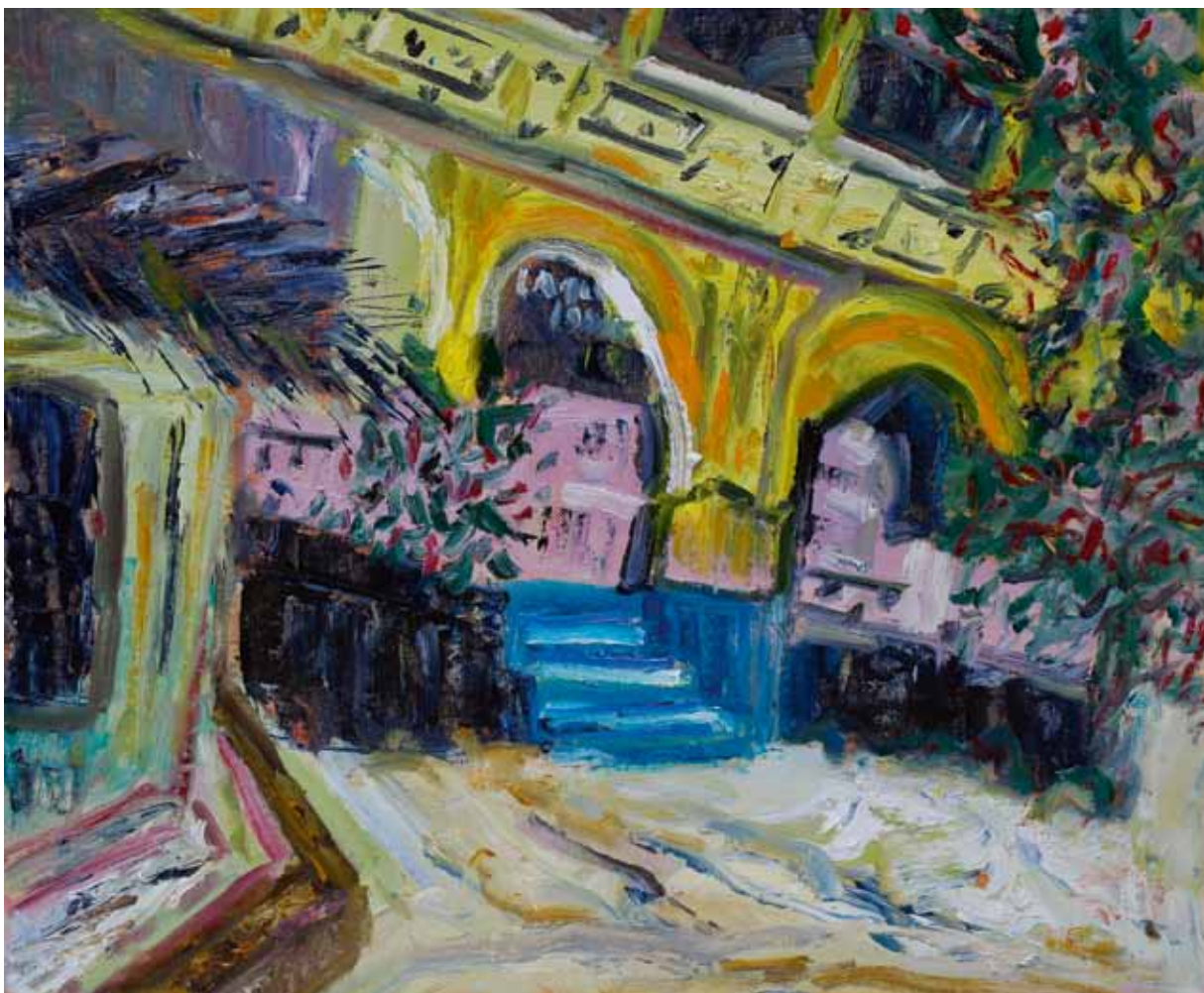
△ Two Boats. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm    ▽ Lamu Town. Oil on canvas, 40 x 80 cm







△ A Boat. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm    ▽ Blue Steps. Oil on canvas, 40 x 47 cm







**Maria Kolyanova**  
(1986, Russia)



Nadia. Oil on canvas, 65 x 45 cm

When Maria and her fellow painter, Olga, first arrived in Kenya, they seemed overwhelmed by this strange place. If a taxi journey through Nairobi appeared exciting, then the first boat trip from Manda to Shela was a revelation. Maria, however, soon found her niche. During her stay on Lamu, she transformed from being quiet and reticent to loquacious and vivacious. Despite arriving with a smattering of English, with the aid of Svetlana and the discovery of an English translation of Chekhov, she soon found her voice. A talented and adept artist, Maria was as comfortable painting Shela village, Maweni and Lamu Town as she was painting faces. She seemed to transport herself into another world as she squinted at her canvas, muttering to herself in Russian. One could sense her internal battle. Many of her paintings revealed her fascination with the endless walls daubed with graffiti. She says that the light and colours she saw on Lamu changed her palette: “I began

to use more blue and red than I am used to.”

Having arrived from bleak winter in the Russian Urals, Maria found the tropical climate and sun also made an impact on her work. Her painting of a hut on Matondoni evoked the muted hues of the sand and the roof but was brought to life by a bold splash of the pink wall. Her works conveyed that particular stillness cast on the buildings by the midday sun.

One could sense Maria was in her element during the Anidan Orphanage visit. Surrounded by children, she produced a montage of portraits. Technically proficient in capturing a likeness, she also conveyed the individual personalities of her subjects.

Maria clearly made the most out of her experience. It was exciting to see her transformation both as a person and an artist during her three-week tenure on Lamu.





Matondoni. Oil on cardboard, 30 x 40 cm





Bembea House.  
Oil on cardboard,  
70 x 35 cm





Evening Street.  
Oil on cardboard,  
70 x 40 cm





**Pavel Kratochvil**  
(1949, Czechia)

When asked about his first impressions of Lamu, Prague-born Pavel laughs and says “donkeys, donkeys and more donkeys!” It seems an apt reply as he was once spotted, working on his canvas with a baby donkey resting its head on his knees. Unlike most of the figurative painters, Pavel is a relative newcomer

to painting and was only introduced to painting ‘plein air’ by his teacher and fellow Lamu artist, Jurgen Leippert.

Looking to alleviate the stress of his career as a cardiologist in Stuttgart, Pavel initially tried his hand at watercolour painting. The medium did not inspire him, but a collection of oil paintings hanging in his office gave him the stimulus to try his hand at landscapes. When his assistants gave him painting lessons as a 60th birthday present, he discovered his forte and continued to take lessons, most notably from Jurgen.

Pavel is influenced by expressive realism and has produced during his time in Lamu, a series of evocative paintings that reflect his interest and capture the still atmosphere of his subject matter. This was Pavel’s first trip to Africa. He says his time in Lamu “transported him into a whole new world.” He was intrigued by the island’s inherent civilisation, the tolerant Muslim community and the mix of culture. Painting in leafy Lamu Town Square was a revelation with the clashes of colour, the women in their ‘bui-buis’ and the

constant movement. Pavel also confesses that while he enjoyed his visit to Maweni, he found that watching the hard labour of men quarrying the coral with such primitive instruments made him feel uncomfortable. He much prefers to convey the positive energy and beauty of a place. He discovered this in abundance in the atmosphere of Anidan Orphanage. He also felt a connection in the happy simplicity of the lifestyle in Shela.

Deeply grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Lamu Painters Festival, Pavel says the intense immersion of painting every day in a society of other artists has taught him a lot. He felt a deep connection with his choice of subject matter which is an important part of his painting process, as he says that “I need a vibration between myself and what I am painting, I can’t paint anything that doesn’t touch me.” When asked how he would describe his experience, he candidly admits that “Lamu is an ideal place for painting – and there are people to help you carry your things!”



Lamu Square Crowded. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm





View from Habibti. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm





△ Lamu Main Square. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm    ▽ Low Tide in Shela. Oil on canvas, 40 x 60 cm

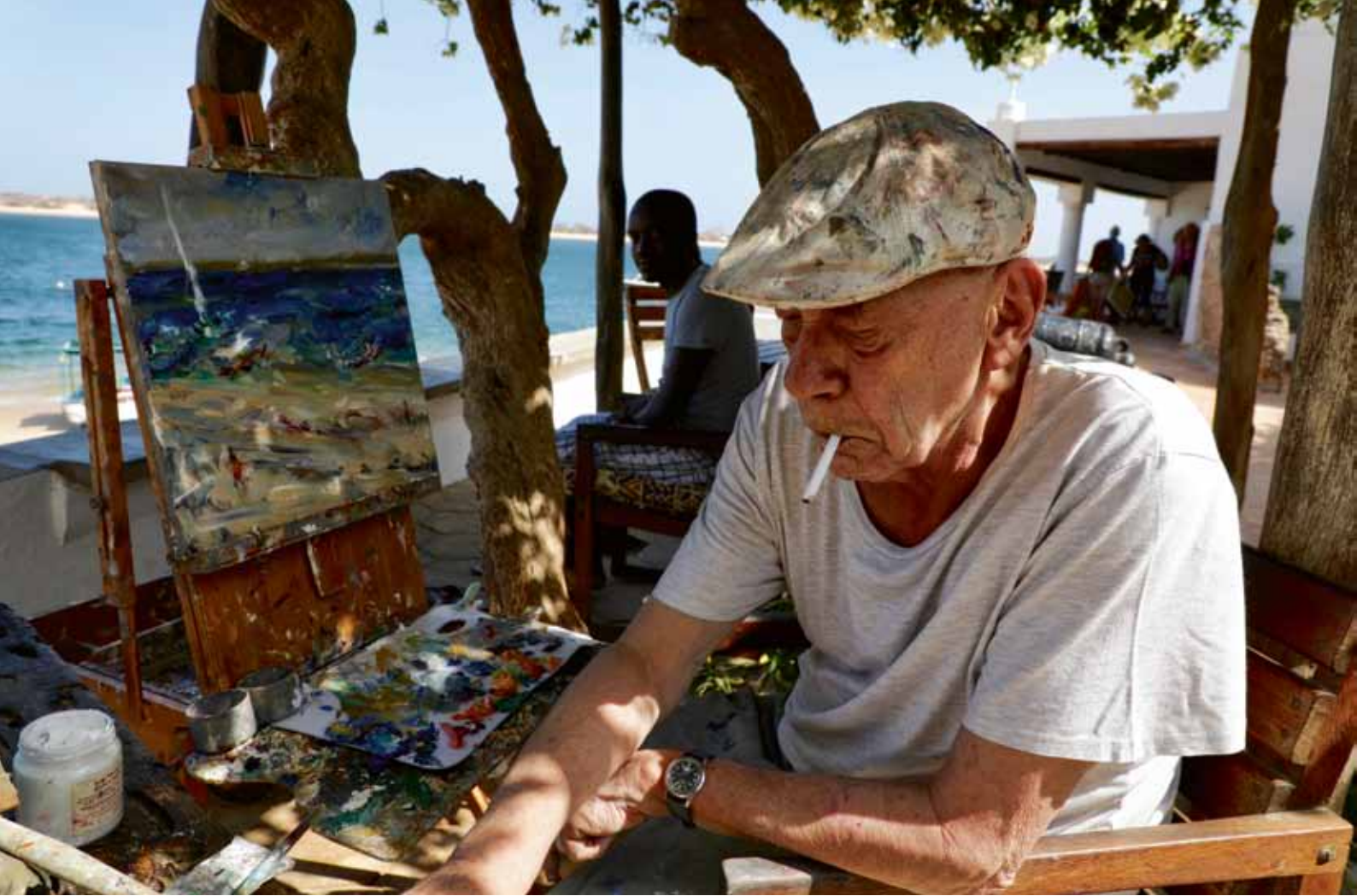






Seashore to Lamu. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm





## Jürgen Leippert (1944, Germany)

‘The Duke is Back!’ proclaims the bold banner fixed to the wall on Shela beach. The Lamu Painters Festival would not be complete with Jürgen Leippert who, as well as being a long-

term member of the Festival, has had a significant influence on many of this year’s participants. Pavel Kratochvil, in particular, cites Jürgen as an inspirational mentor. He is renowned for his

vibrant impasto oils and an outgoing personality that has made him a great favourite among the painters and residents alike.

Sadly this time, Jürgen was a shadowy figure during the proceedings. He eschewed many of the excursions to paint closer to home. His distinctive paint-flecked flat cap could be easily spotted on the corner of Peponi terrace as he sat in deep contemplation. His painterly output was limited to scenes of Shela beach and views from his comfortable apartment at the top of Habibti House.

Restricting his social life to Habibti House, he occasionally came out of his retreat for a night at Peponi bar. On these rare evenings, armed with his favourite Margherita cocktail, one caught a glimpse of his legendary charm. Ebullient and imbued with old-world courtesy, he kissed the ladies’ hands as he engaged in a mild flirtation.



Habibti View. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm





Peponi Beach. Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm





The Bar is Open.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 20 cm





Fatumah's Tower. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm





Tatiana Lushnikova  
(1973, Russia)



Aisha. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm

Born in Penze, in the middle of Russia, Tatiana's work is rooted in the grand tradition of the Russian 'plein air' movement. She was drawn to painting as a child and admits to always loving the smell of oil paints. Influenced by her art-loving father, Tatiana studied at the art school in Penze before completing her education in Saint Petersburg. Despite a shaky grasp of English, Tatiana quietly showed her adventurous side, joining in on all the excursions and was enthused by what she saw. She mentions that "I am inspired by the new places, being surrounded by the sea and of course the sun." Tatiana says when asked about her methods, "I prefer painting in the open air. I love painting landscapes. But I always try and convey my emotions and my personal impressions in my paintings." Her paintings expressed the immediacy of a particular moment similar to an intimate snapshot. She demonstrated her talent in the captur-

ing of the sharp shadows cast by the rooftops, the brightness of the clothes and the debris-strewn beach. "Different places need their individual effects and feelings, and Lamu has inspired me with its light and colour. I find myself using lots of white and blue hues." While she found plenty of forms, imagery and people to paint during her time on the island, Tatiana reflects that she was most inspired by the life of the fishermen on the beach, when the tide was at its lowest point. She says it is because "they are so interesting and different." On her return to Saint Petersburg, Tatiana is planning an exhibition of her Lamu paintings. "I think it will be a wonderful theme that will be of interest to a wide Russian audience."





Baitil Aman View. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm





Shela Street.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 40 cm

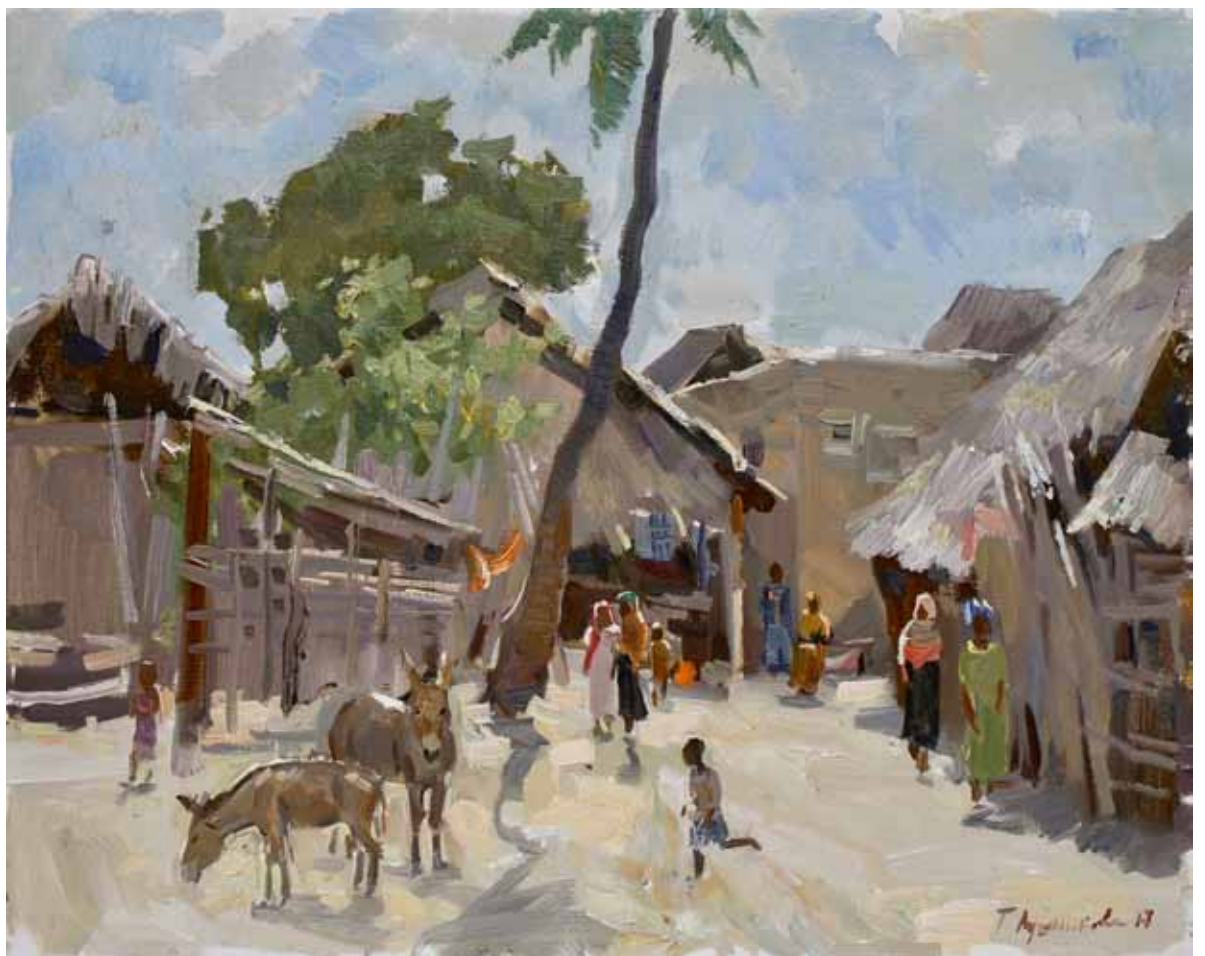


Manda Baobab.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm





Fishermen's  
Beach.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm



Mantondoni  
Village.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 50 cm





**Irina Melikhova**  
(1973, Russia)



Nana and Abas. Oil on canvas, 45 x 23 cm

Irina describes herself as a ‘happy person’ because she always knew that she was destined to be an artist. Fascinated by the world around her, it seemed natural for her to express her love of nature and animals through her art. She found all her favourite subjects in abundance during her participation in the Lamu Painters Festival.

She was born in the small military city of Penza in Russia where she had little exposure to other artists. Her mother, however, was a printmaker and encouraged her daughter’s artistic talent. She recounts how a serious illness as a young girl, where she almost died, meant many months recuperating in bed. On her wall hung a copy of a Russian painting, which she credits with her decision to become a full-time artist. On her recovery, she moved to Leningrad to study at the I.E. Repin School of Art.

A regular participant on Russian ‘plein air’ painting trips, Irina is a well-travelled artist. However, she was unprepared for her first sight of the Indian Ocean, which she says,

“awakened her creative inspiration.” She was charmed by the Lamu’s leisurely rhythm enhanced by the lack of cars and the friendly local people. The island’s rich, exotic colours were a wonder to her. She found herself re-assessing her palette and mixing paints that she had never previously used in Russia.

The sense of living in an artistic community enhanced Irina’s stay, and she delighted in the sharing of ideas among the participants. She says, “I experienced real happiness during my trip, and it was a real pleasure to paint the sea, landscapes, house interiors and, of course, the people.” She cites her visits to Anidan Orphanage as one of the many highlights.

Grateful to be included in the Painter’s Festival, Irina believes that her stay on Lamu has had a profound effect on her development as an artist. On her return to Russia, she plans to use her new colour palette to create a collection of her impressions of Lamu. She says “I take back a lot of warm memories of this incredible place.”





△ View to Friday Mosque. Oil on canvas, 27 x 50 cm    ▽ Morning on the Shore. Oil on canvas, 35 x 40 cm

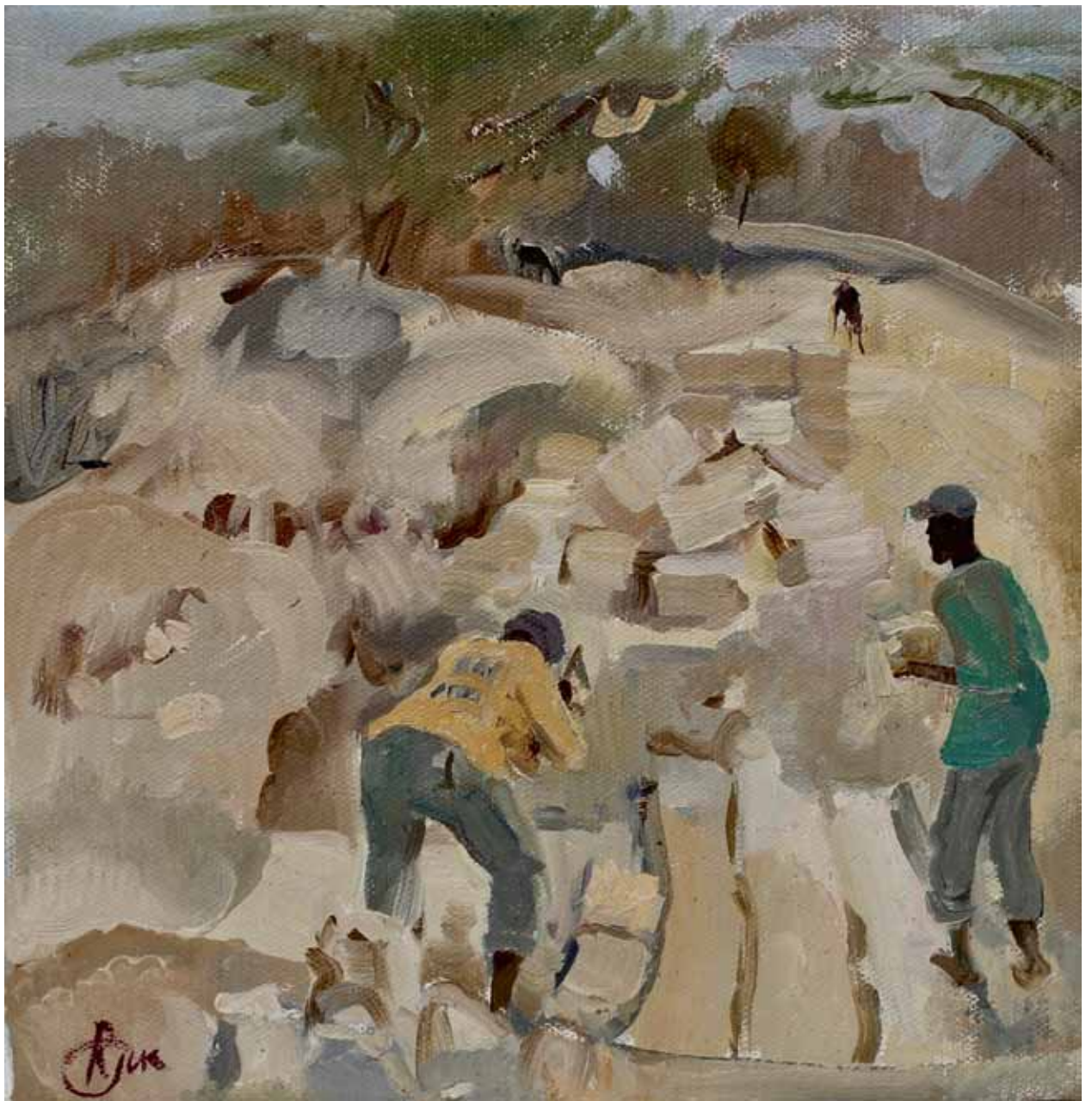






Shela Village.  
Oil on canvas,  
60 x 26 cm

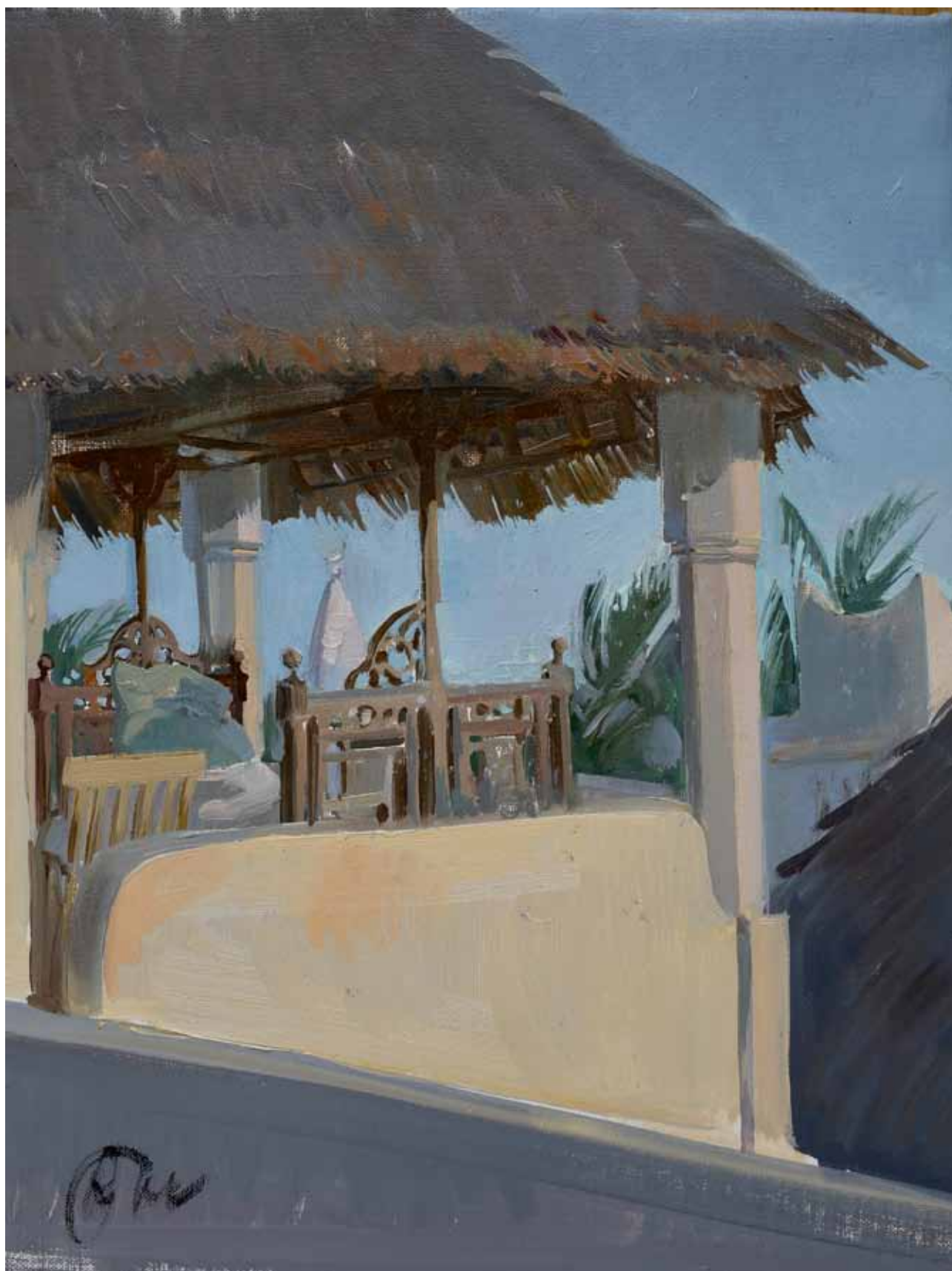




△ In Maweni. Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 cm    ▽ Matondoni. Oil on canvas, 30 x 60 cm







Roof of the Hotel. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm





△ Nadia. Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm    ▽ Fishermen's Beach. Oil on canvas, 40 x 60 cm







## Marjolein Menke (1957, Netherlands)

"I fell in love with drawing and painting when I was in kindergarten. I asked my mother if there was a school where you only learn to draw, and it was a revelation when she said yes, it's called art school." Marjolein replies when asked when she decided to pursue her love of art.



Matondoni Girl. Oil on linen, 50 x 35 cm

Originally trained as a sculptor, she turned to painting for practical reasons. "Working in stone is backbreaking work and transporting sculptures is even harder. Travelling with just an easel and paints seemed much more sensible."

Marjolein has wanted to participate in the Lamu Painters Festival from the moment she first heard about it. "It is everything and more than I ever thought it would be – in fact, it is a thousand times better, and it makes me want to cry with happiness. I am so grateful to have been invited." We are chatting outside the Ali Lamu Shop as Marjolein paints the view of the alleyway under the curious gaze of two little boys, still dressed in 'kanzus' from their Madrasa lesson. The ubiquitous donkeys nibble at one another's flanks, and passersby stop to inspect the painting's progress. The artists seem to have become a natural part of the daily scenery. "I find the process of painting 'plein air' meditative and therefore very attractive. I like the

directness which I think also stems from being a sculptor." Standing back to assess her work, she mentions that she is primarily a portrait painter but likes a challenge, such as painting the subtleties of the ever-changing Lamu light. She explains how it radically alters the essence of a subject's original attraction.

She loves the fact that she seems to have found a natural rhythm and routine to her time in Lamu. A few days later I find her painting in Shela's sandy square. She is patiently explaining to a rabble of cheeky children why they cannot take her paint palette. While she enjoys their inquisitiveness, she honestly admits that she has found some of her experience a bit of a culture shock.

On our group visit to Anidan Orphanage, an animated Marjolein was in her element as she captured the likenesses of the children who offered to sit for her. Her resulting rapid oil sketches were fresh and exuded vitality.





View from Jannatan Hotel. Oil on linen, 35 x 50 cm





Peponi Beach.  
Oil on canvas,  
30 x 40 cm



Kijani Beach.  
Oil on canvas,  
30 x 40 cm



Lea, Sewing.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 40 cm



Light on Lamu Square.  
Oil on linen,  
27 x 20 cm







Olga Peshkova  
(1989, Russia)



Shela Street. Watercolour on paper, 60 x 40 cm

The only watercolourist in the festival, Olga constantly demonstrated her proficiency with this challenging technique. She says “it was very hard to paint in this hot climate as I use wet on wet. I had to apply my washes quickly as my paper kept drying out.” Brought up in Perm, Olga always knew she wanted to be an artist. Her work is influenced by Russian nature, and she is especially attached to the Urals. She says that she has been a ‘plein air’ painter from a young age and was drawn to painting the rivers, rocks, forests and little villages around her.

Maria and Olga arrived together, and one could see the influence they had on each other, often painting the same scene in their different mediums. As time passed, Olga’s palette lost its colder hues to be replaced with a more vivid colour range. As she says “I think the colours in Lamu are very special and nothing like the colours I use in my country.”

Olga was able to summarise a sense of her surroundings as portrayed in her watercolour of a rare rainy day in Lamu Town. One could appreciate the greyness of the sky, the blackness of the women’s ‘bui buis’ and the intense red of the umbrellas. Her close-up portraits of donkey faces showed her light touch as she captured their hairy noses and inquisitive eyes. She demonstrated her mastery of her medium with a delicate use of salt in some pieces. In one painting she even manipulated the drops from a fleeting rain shower – creating the sensation of the waves hitting the boats lying at anchor.

While she admits that she initially felt uncomfortable by the noise and strange smells that are so particular to Lamu, she soon relaxed into the unique Shela rhythm. “It has been like a fairy tale. It could have come out of a book or even a film.” She says. “When I go home, I will tell everyone how amazing it is – and how they need to come and feel it for themselves.”





Little Donkey Girl. Watercolour on paper, 75 x 55 cm





Shela House. Watercolour on paper, 70 x 50 cm





△ Rainy Day in Lamu. Watercolor on paper, 50 x 70 cm    ▽ Blue Fishnets. Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm







## Marina Rubanova

(1965, Russia)

Transplanted from a Moscow winter to Lamu, it took Marina a good week to settle into the island rhythm. She admits, “at the very beginning I was overwhelmed by the strangeness, and I was frustrated by my inability to convey the beauty around me.” Once established, she found the island’s bright, exotic colours, smells and liveliness



Nadia. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm

had a profound effect on her work. She was fascinated by a sense of harmony and diversity of the people from the Maasai warriors to the Swahili men, women and children. She also found it stimulating to work alongside European and Kenyan artists and sculptors. Brought up in Grozny and proud of her Terek Cossack heritage, Marina knew she wanted to be an artist from an early age. Her sister graduated from art school, and her father liked to sketch. A geologist, he would often take her on his trips and introduced her to the natural world. At the age of 12, she was bed-bound with a serious illness. Marina credits her recovery with the days surrounded by her family’s collection of reproductions of French Impressionist and Russian art. Health restored, she moved from Grozny and pursued her studies in Moscow. It was a tumultuous period in Russian history with the disintegration of the USSR and the onset of the Chechen war. Studying painting under famous classical Russian artists including Alexander

Fomkin, Eugene Troshev, Sergei Gavrilyachenko, and Ivan Lubennikov, she was also learnt the disciplines of mosaic, sgraffito and mural painting.

Marina has been involved in plenty of prestigious commissions including murals and mosaics. She has also exhibited her work in several solo shows. As well as painting, she teaches art and writes about ‘plein air’ in Russia and other countries.

Lamu has had a lasting impression on Marina, and she says that she has been encouraged to revise her painting technique. In particular, she eloquently describes the ‘pinkish-pearl’ light as enriching her work. Thinking ahead to her next project, she says, “I’m thinking of pictures on a biblical theme using this colour.”

“This experience is unforgettable, and I dream of returning to the Lamu Archipelago....”





Baobab. Oil on canvas, 70 x 70 cm





Flowers in the Street.  
Oil on canvas,  
80 x 40 cm





Dunes and Beach. Oil on canvas, 20 x 100 cm



Takwa Ruins. Oil on canvas, 40 x 60 cm



Shela Beach. Oil on canvas, 20 x 100 cm





## Valentin Skachkov (1953, Russia)

'Prolific' is a usually one of those hyperbolic words that embellish many a painter's biographies. That is until you meet Valentin Skachkov. At the end of his three-week sojourn, Valentin had painted well over 30 canvases. He was adventurous in his outings, scrambling up the sand dunes to capture the view across Shela Village, painting in the harsh midday sun on the beach, and capturing the bustling activity in Lamu Town Square.

Dressed in a flamboyant shirt, ponytail peeking out of his baseball cap, Valentin became a regular sight on his morning commute to Lamu Town. Encumbered with painting paraphernalia, he stoically trudged the long trek over the baking hot sands. His lack of English and our deficiency in speaking Russian initially gave little opportunity for conversation. However, as the weeks slipped by and he became more confident in his surroundings, he managed

to overcome the language barrier. A 'good morning' or 'good evening' was added to his cheery wave. He certainly managed to express himself through his painting. Clearly influenced by the Russian 'plein air' movement, there was a timeless quality to his art.

The paintings ranged from in size from grand scale vistas to small, exquisite seascapes. Valentin's style verged on impressionistic as he rapidly depicted his surroundings - a seductive hint of bare canvas peeking through the paint. His compositions were full of atmosphere and movement. It will be interesting to see what his Russian audience will make from his huge portfolio of work painted on Lamu Island.



In Maweni. Oil on canvas, 30 x 60 cm





Shela Village View. Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm



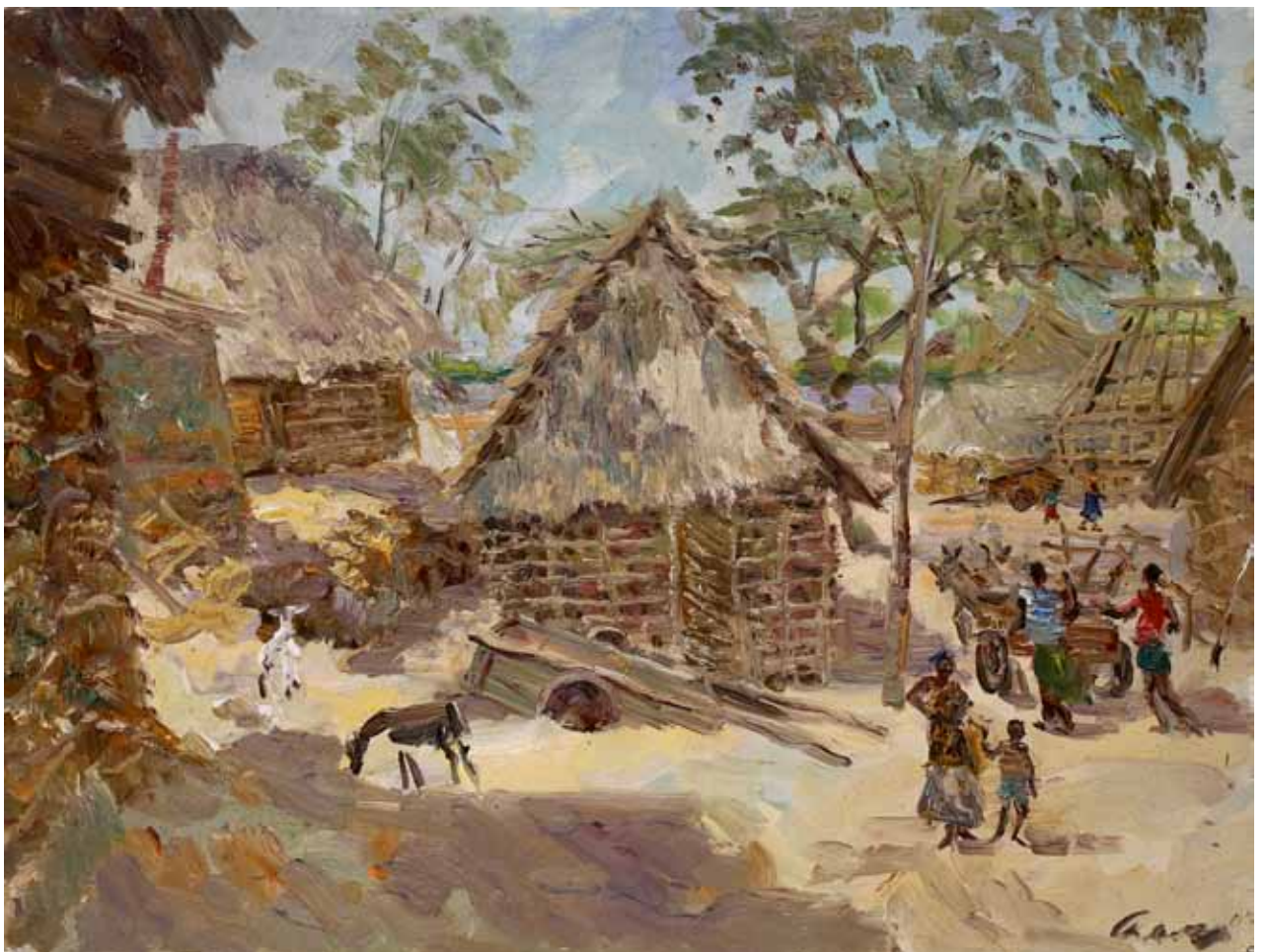


Nadia. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm





△ Fishermen's Beach. Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm    ▽ Maweni. Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm







Takwa Ruins. Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm





Shela Alley. Oil on canvas, 70 x 48 cm





## Diederik Vermeulen

(1942, Netherlands)

A Lamu Painter's Festival veteran, paint-ingrained Diederik has the appearance of the quintessential artist. Used to painting in his signature bold, thick impasto, it is easy to track down his movements. Pointing at the paint smears on his mast, Nasir the boat captain of Lady Gaga, shrugs his shoulders and says "Diederik was here."

On the surface, Diederik seems to be a self-contained, quiet artist. However, our conversations reveal a deadpan sense of humour and humility towards his talent. When asked how he would describe Lamu to other artists, he replies, "I don't talk much about it. In fact, I don't talk much about anything!" A former maths teacher, Diederik finds a parallel between mathematics and art. "Maths is a beautiful thing too, and both disciplines require research to uncover the absolute answers."

Influenced by the French Impressionists, he disagrees that his paintings veer towards 'expressionism.' He just

likes to paint in a very loose manner. He admires Jurgen Leippert whom he quotes as saying that the act of painting is just the placement of blobs. Trying to paint the actual subject rather than concentrating on the placement of blobs of paint is detrimental to an artist's development.

Diederik maintains a fascination with the uncultivated environment. Age 45, he took up painting when he moved to Portugal, where he now spends most of his time. While he appreciated the landscapes, he found himself obsessed with painting weeds, which he candidly admits might be a reaction to his father's abhorrence of a messy garden. His fourth time on the island, Diederik finds that little has changed since his last visit. He loves the fact that the mode of transport is by boat and the freedom of being able to paint everywhere and anywhere. He is enchanted by the medieval atmosphere of the Island and believes that Lamu is a special enclave unlike anywhere else. During

his stay, he was inspired to paint a tree red, and since then red trees have become a bit of a trademark. He relishes painting outdoors and believes that "If you are uncomfortable, you paint differently. You want to get it over and done with and the less time you spend on details, the better the outcome."

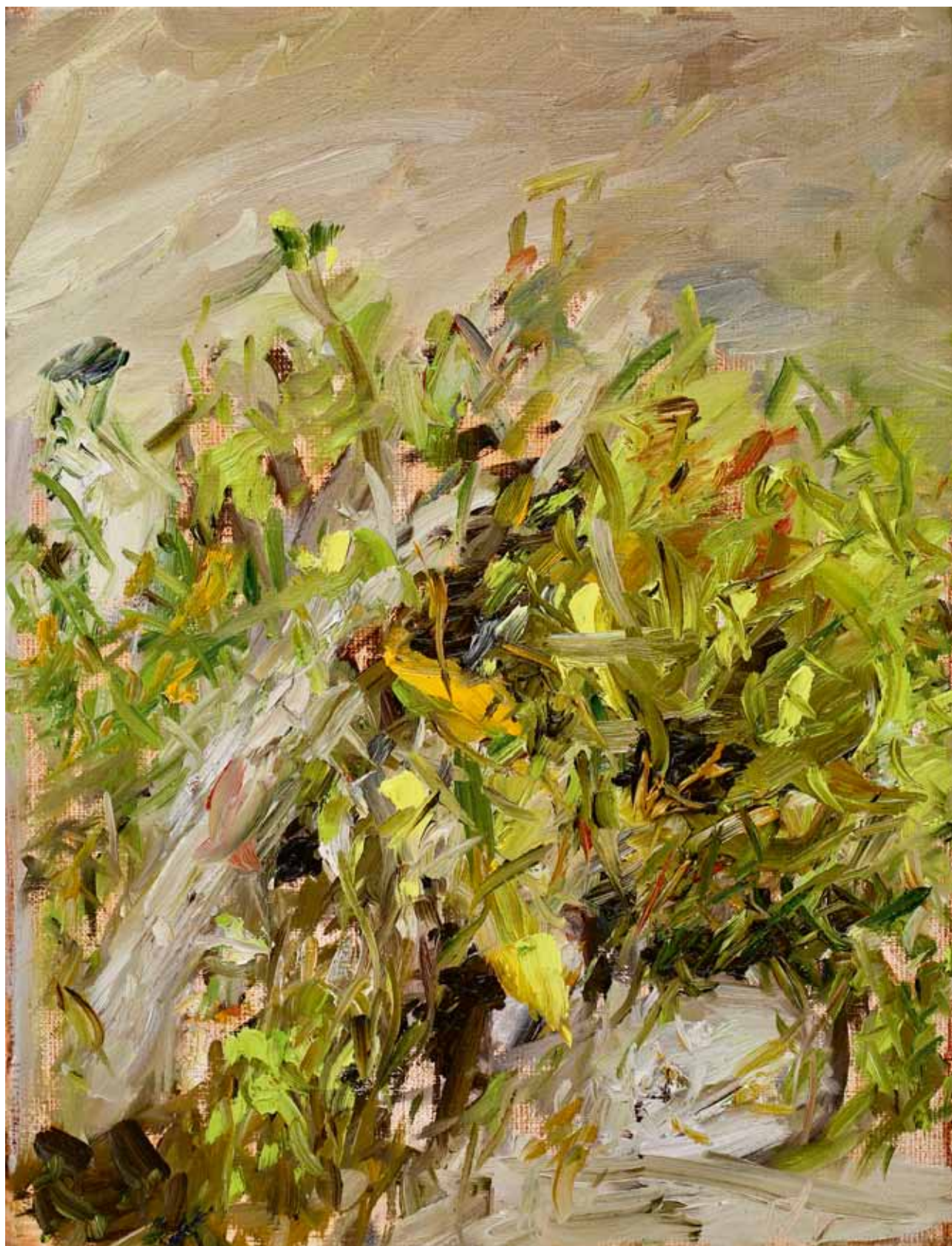
Like all true creatives, Diederik is constantly pushing the boundaries through continual experimentation although he feels that it is important not to change one's personal style radically. "You are your art – so if you don't change – why should your art?" He enjoyed being part of this year's larger Lamu Painters Festival as he found himself pushed to try out new ideas. Although, with his usual self-effacement, he admits that he found the evaluation process by other artists quite intimidating.





Palm Tree Explosion. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm





Flowers. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm





Lamu Square.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm



Matondoni Fence.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 50 cm





**Karin Voogd**  
(1962, Netherlands)

“Organic” is a word that continually creeps into Karin’s description of her painting style. Unlike the other artists who sensed that they were ‘outsiders’ in Lamu, Karin has immersed herself in the local lifestyle. A participant in the 2015 Painter’s Festival, she returned to Lamu on several occasions, learnt to speak Swahili and lived in Matondoni Village. Her familiarity with the language and the people has given her a unique ‘insider’ status.

“Present day Lamu has some similarities to the life characterised by the 16th Century Dutch painters,” Karin reflects. She feels there is a similarity between the Dutch and Lamuans and mentions their innate artisanship as an example. Perhaps this contemplation has influenced her latest series of paintings depicting local interiors. Uncomfortable in the architect-de-

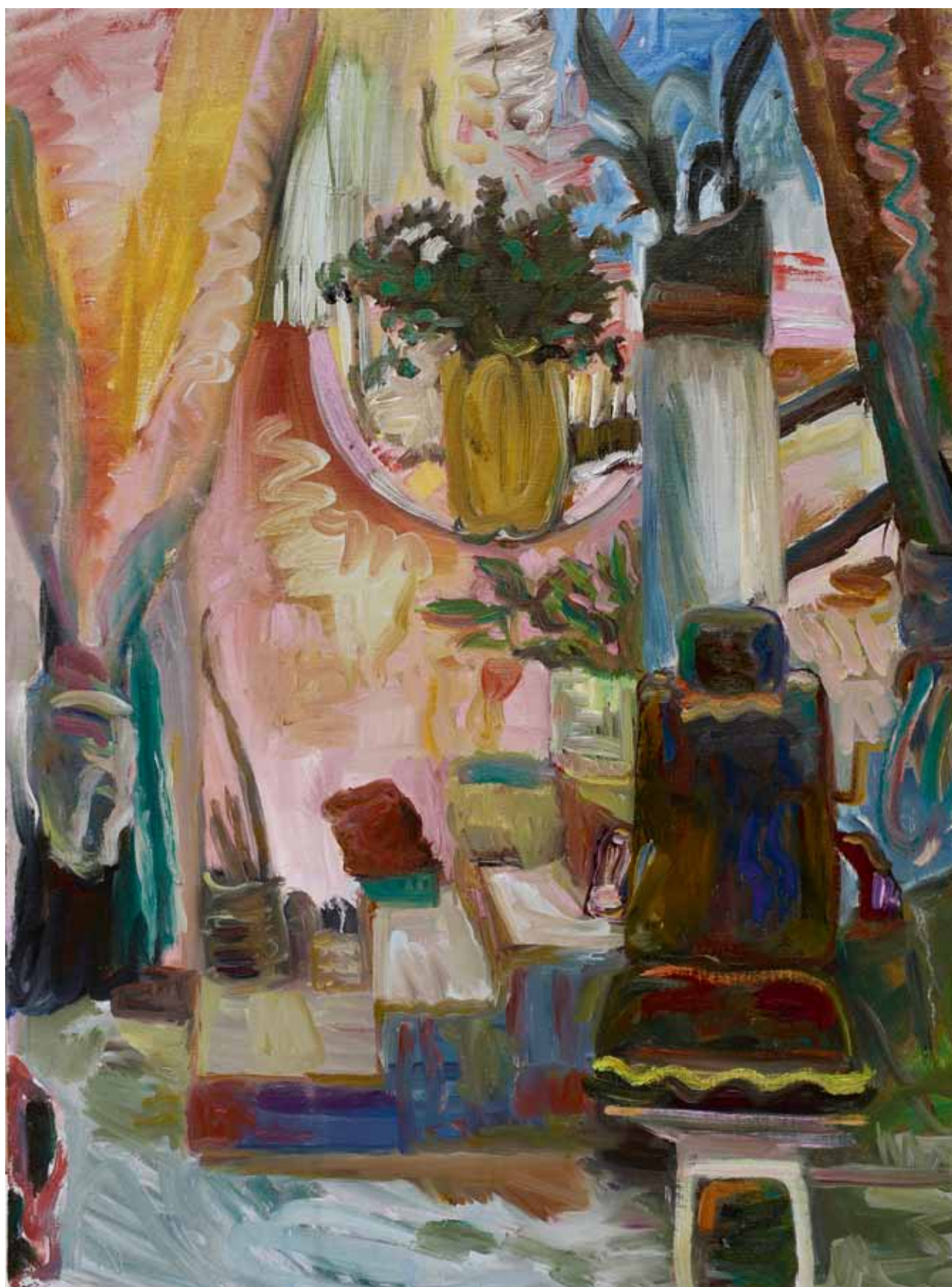
signed luxury houses in Shela, she was inspired by the hand-made ‘organic’ element of the local homes. Karin says that her approach to painting is entirely intuitive – similar to speaking another language. As she says, “it is important that I make things with my hands rather than my head.” That was evident on the Matondoni excursion. Setting up her easel in a murky back room, she painted blindly, only using her head torch to mix her colours. The result was a work shrouded in a mysterious dark light, with an emphasis on the chequerboard patterned floor.

Karin likes a sense of mystery in painting and cites the old masters, Rembrandt in particular, as an inspiration. Her dislike of outlines is evident in her paintings where her subject matter is encapsulated in a shorthand of swirls, dots and squiggles. Her piece, ‘The

Dentist’s Chair’, is painted in a bright palette of pinks, greens and yellows. When she first entered the room, she assumed it was a hairdresser’s seat but was enchanted to find out that a dentist chair had been given pride of place. Like many of the other artists, Karin is in awe of Natalia Dik’s profound artistic knowledge. She says she relies upon Natalia’s incisive eye to point out mistakes in composition. The feeling is mutual as Natalia mentioned Karin’s work in glowing terms.

Karin has not only immersed herself in the Swahili ways, she has embarked on a mission to inspire the Island’s budding artists. Her intention is to stock the local Lamu library with books on art and art theory. With her drive, ambition and persuasive skills, Lamu Island will soon have one of the most comprehensive art libraries in Kenya.





Dentist Chair. Oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm





Chai na Narisa. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm



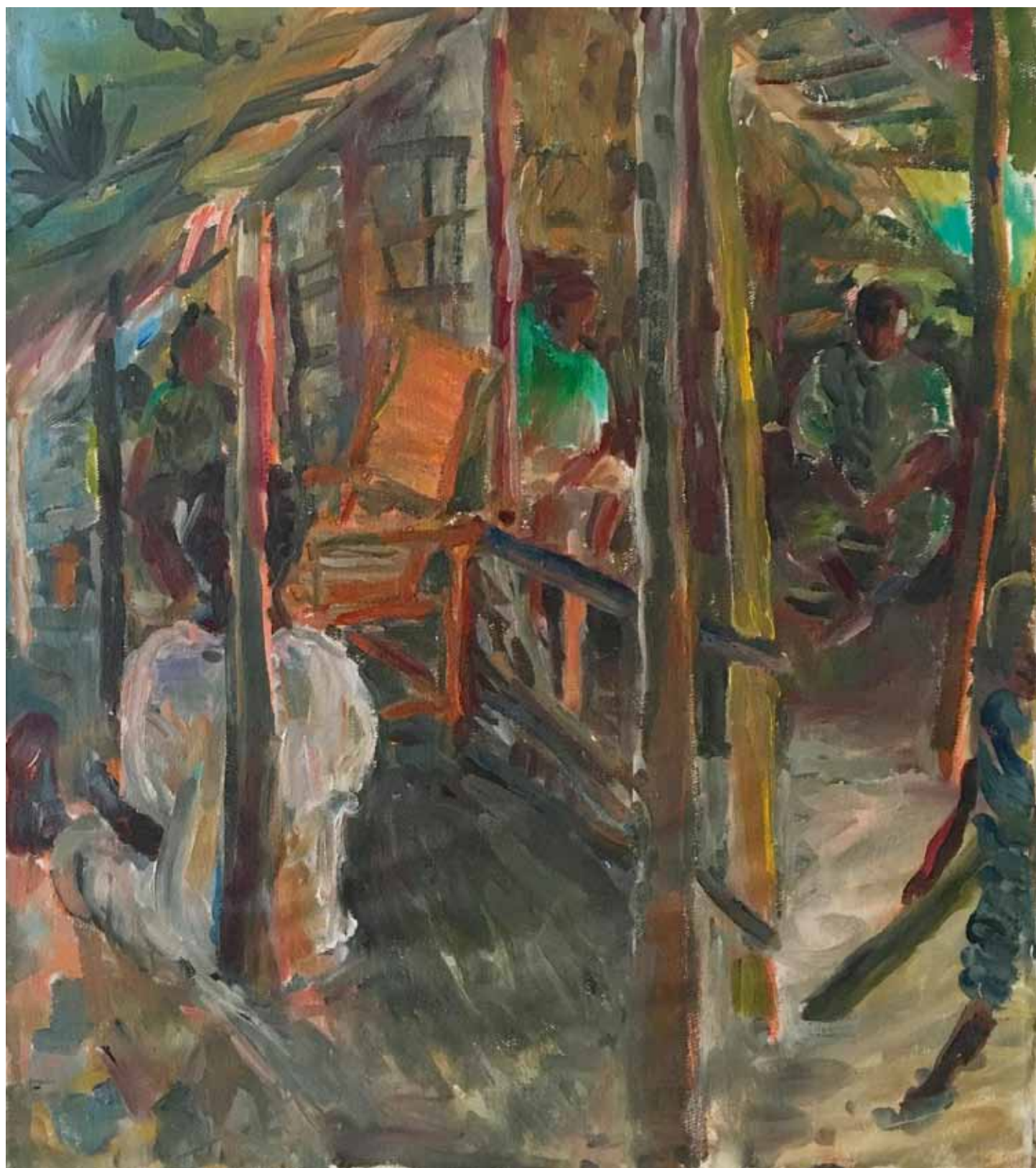


Mera's Kitchen.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 50 cm



Don't Provoke Her.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 60 cm





Pale Maskani – Nice Place. Oil on canvas, 50 x 45 cm





The Wake.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 50 cm



Story Story.  
Oil on canvas,  
40 x 50 cm









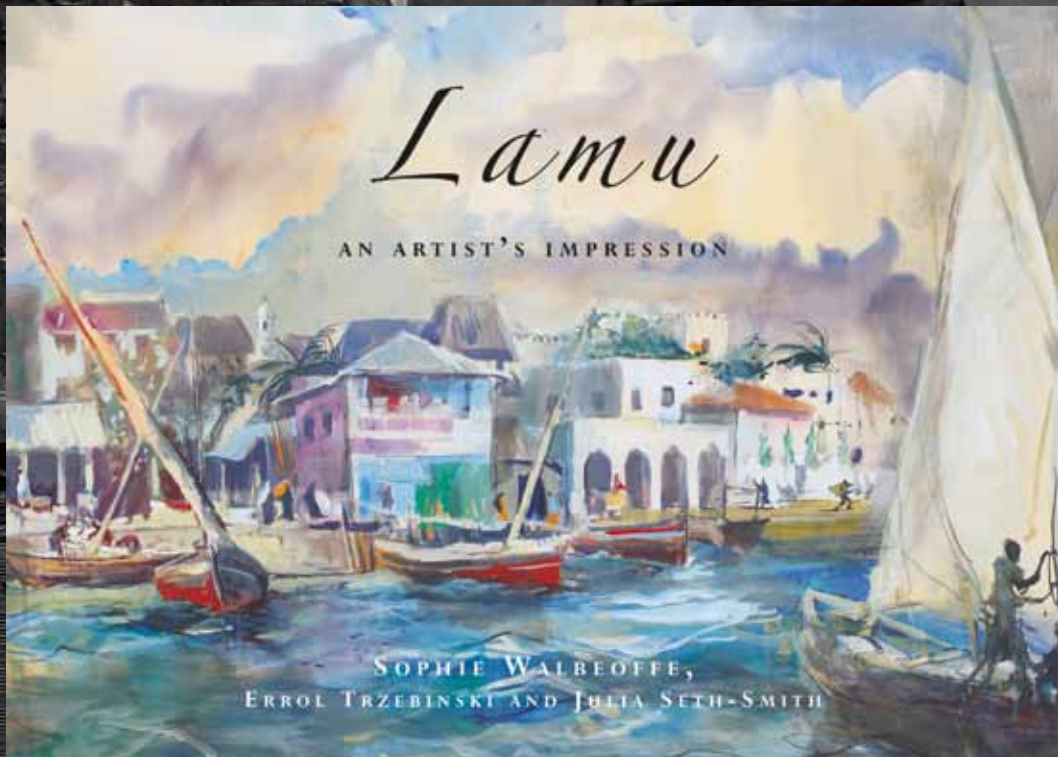


## LAMU SMILES



People and Places by Roland Klemp

Roland Klemp, Photography  
Hardcover, 130 Pages, 20 x 25 cm  
Book available on [www.blurb.com](http://www.blurb.com)

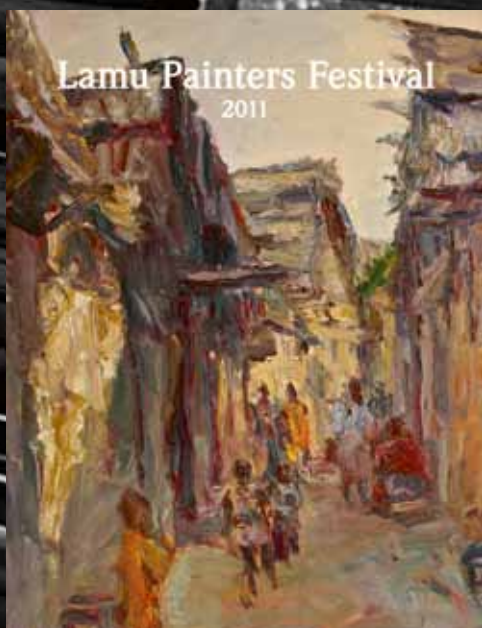


Lamu – An Artist's Impression  
Sophie Walbeoffe, Watercolour  
Errol Trzebinski and Julia Seth-Smith, Text  
Hardcover, 100 Pages, 15 x 21 cm  
Contact: [info@lamupaintersfestival.org](mailto:info@lamupaintersfestival.org)



Lamu Painters Festival  
February 6th – 19th, 2017  
Baitil Aman Hotel & Jannatan Hotel, Shela  
Lamu, Kenya

Director/Curator – Herbert Menzer  
Photographers – Roland Klemp, Eric Gitonga  
Author – Julia Seth-Smith  
Festival Secretary – Camilla McConnell  
General Assistance – Coltrane McDowell  
Senior Field Manager – Omar Mafreezer  
Field Managers – Omar Mzee, Hamisi Patani  
Baitil Aman Gallery – Grace Sidi Neema  
Catering – Evance Shamwama, Kahindi Baya  
Baitil Aman Hotel – Husna Hussein, Milton Elado, Kahindi Ngumbao  
Jannatan Hotel – Hamid Mohammed, Baraka Amos



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[www.lamupaintersfestival.org](http://www.lamupaintersfestival.org)



Piet Groenendijk  
No Smoking.  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 40 cm (Detail)

