

Article Pulchri magazine

### *Legends in Lines and Lenses*

It was mid-November 2022 when I received an email from photographer Patricia Steur about the possibility of taking a trial class in classical portraiture at Atelier Saint Luke's. When the email from Patricia arrived, I was actually a little surprised. Was it the Patricia Steur, the also internationally acclaimed photographer who has become best known for her rock photos of musicians, tattooed and otherwise? I could hardly imagine it, but of course a quick click on the link to her website immediately gave the answer. I realized that I already had a book by her and already knew her photos pretty well. The interviews on YouTube completed the picture and refreshed my memory.

And there she stood in the cold in front of the solid wood, richly decorated front door of the building on Elandstraat where she and her partner Theo Maijenburg, who had given the course as a gift, appeared to live a stone's throw away. That was a requirement; the course had to be within walking distance. And here I thought she still lived in Amsterdam.

(Besides painting, teaching has been my passion and my life for almost 25 years now. In my own school, Atelier Sint Lucas, I have seen many talents come to fruition and there is nothing better than to experience that as a teacher you can contribute to someone's artistic development or the (re-)discovery of one's own talent. The achievements of winners and participants in programs such as Sterren op het Doek, the Nieuwe Vermeer or the Nederlandse Portretprijs are now legion and I hope to be able to do it for many years to come).

Once we arrived upstairs on the third floor of the building, it soon became apparent that Patricia was finally able to fulfill her long-cherished wish of further developing her great passion for drawing and painting. As a young girl, she had always longed to go to the academy, but her mother in particular did not think it was such a good plan. A story that is almost standard, especially from that earlier generation, but as always the blood crawls where it cannot go. Patricia and I clicked very quickly. On a personal level, because we are now very good friends, but certainly also in terms of interest in music! Over the years, I've had great experiences with David Bowie and Luther Vandross related musicians, but Patricia has met everyone and everything and captured them on film.

One of the first stories she told me was about her encounters with also for me great heroes like Lou Reed and Andy Warhol. Lou had just sat next to her on the couch (with her then boyfriend from the music industry) and she didn't realize who he was at all at the time. I didn't believe my ears, but it was hilarious. Later she got the chance to capture Andy Warhol at the famous Factory in NYC and that is another magical story. Her track record and entire life is so impressive that it's almost a waste for me to tell too much about it. She is better off doing that herself and indeed, her impressive catalog of works and autobiography "Hungry Eyes" will be published next year. Keep an eye out for it!

Meanwhile, our shared passion for music has also given rise to several collaborations. Patricia and her mainstay, Theo Maijenburg, have made it possible for me to be present at a few photo sessions to witness her distinctive way of working. And with that came the great added benefit for me that I was allowed to use her photos for portraits of Golden Earring luminaries such as bassist Rinus Gerritsen and drummer Cesar Zuiderwijk, among others. Later Spike van Zoest of Direct was added. Patricia knows them all and that makes it a lot easier. My portraits executed in mixed media, which in terms of technique are inspired by portraits by Albrecht Dürer (1471 - 1528) in particular, and a retrospective of photographs taken by Patricia are all on display and on display at the exhibition "Legends in Lines and Lenses."

But there is more and two more musicians appeared in front of her camera last year. The first was my good friend Rias Baarda, the frontman of The Dutch David Bowie Tribute Band Starman who broke through by finishing as a finalist in the 2023 television program Battle of the Bands. And then none other than Ava Cherry, model, singer and muse of David Bowie himself. How that came about is a separate story, but I was able to put Rias in touch with Ava and they are even performing together now. First at Paaspop, then last July in Liverpool at The David Bowie World

Fan Convention and then the AFAS in Amsterdam to follow. Along with two other friendly former Bowie band members, bassist Carmine Rojas and guitarist Kevin Armstrong, this will be the highlight so far!

When Ava came to Holland to perform, she was very eager to appear in front of Patricia's camera and it turned out to be a great success! In fact, one of the photos has since been used for her latest solo release "Fire" (for which Theo created the flashy album cover design). According to Ava, who has also been in front of a camera a thousand times with her fashion past, the session with Patricia is one of the best ever! A nice compliment, especially considering she has also been in front of the camera of such luminaries as Mick Rock, Bill Cunningham and Victor Skrebneski.

I soon found out that the schedule for the concert at the AFAS is scheduled for next Thursday, November 7, and Patricia and I's show is scheduled for November 9. This could hardly be a coincidence anymore and because sometimes magic just has to do its work, I asked Ava and Rias to be at our exhibition. They were eager to do so themselves and Ava immediately offered to come and sing at the opening, acoustically, along with Rias. It shows the drive of these purebred musicians. The intimate performance will take place on Friday evening, November 8, starting at 7 p.m., a day after the performance in Amsterdam.

Due to the small capacity of the Louix XV venue, the performance is for invited guests only, but will also be viewable on social media via a livestream.

I've already seen Ava and Rias perform together and believe me, this is going to be truly amazing. Goosebumps guaranteed. And after all, that's what it's all about. Music and art as connecting factors in a troubled and divided world!

I think that the exhibition of Patricia's and my work, introduced by the music of Ava and Rias is an ultimate example of a true Gesamtkunstwerk and thus totally appropriate in this era.

The Q&A and the opening word will be performed by none other than music journalist (for the well-known music magazine OOR, among others) and documentary maker for VPRO for many years, Bram van Splunteren. It doesn't get much better than this and because the stories are so comprehensive, there will also be a separate Meet&Greet by Patricia and me especially for Pulchri members (date and time to follow). Rock till you drop!

Arjan van Gent | Artist