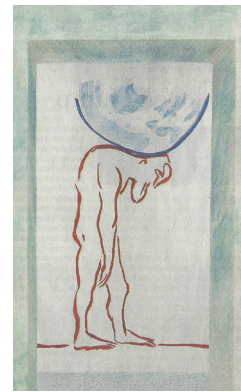


METRO PICTURES

Nayeri, Farah. "Worlds dancing in her head," *International New York Times* (July 21, 2016): 10-11.

International New York Times



PARIS

The artist Camille Henrot has been relentless in the pursuit of her visions

BY FARAH NAYERI

Camille Henrot drew obsessively as a girl growing up in Paris. She doodled on the walls of her family's apartment, and scratched up the wooden panels in the elevator. Her mother, an engraver, let her skip school to go to the zoo and sketch the animals there.

Ms. Henrot, who just turned 38, remains relentless in the practice of her art. Now living in New York, she won the Silver Lion at the 2013 Venice Biennale for "Grosse fatigue," a collagelike video on the creation of the universe. She also draws and makes sculpture. Her most recent major work is a suite of frescoes, her first ever, in the vaulted stables of the 16th-century Palazzo Ruspoli in Rome.

The frescoes are part of an exhibition called "Monday," commissioned by the Fondazione Memmo, which loosely illustrates the melancholy and metaphysical angst associated with the first day of the week. One frescoed figure sits on a stone, smoking idly. Another glumly carries a globe on his shoulders. A series of semi-abstract bronze sculptures evokes similar emotions. The show also includes a zoetrope of miniature dogs spinning around a maypole.

"Camille is very brave, in the sense that she's not getting stuck in a formula," said Massimiliano Gioni, the artistic director of the New Museum in New York, who curated the 2013 Biennale and gave her a show at the New Museum in 2014.

Such success at Venice "can be kind of suffocating," Mr. Gioni said, and artists "could end up repeating themselves. Camille is not doing that. She's very disciplined and she's pushing herself to keep working and doing her research."

Fresh from installing the Rome exhibition, Ms. Henrot discussed her career

last month at her mother's studio in Paris. An iron-wheeled engraving machine stood in one corner, and portfolios of gravures leaned against the walls. She paused to rescue a few of the fresco brushes she had used at the Palazzo Ruspoli, noting that they should be laid flat rather than placed vertically in a jar.

Ms. Henrot said that recognition at the Venice Biennale — and the financial success that came with it — had made it materially possible for her to work more.

"Taking on fairly ambitious projects and producing a lot is a pace that suits me," she said. "When I was young, I was a little tortured by the fact that I couldn't make all of the works that I had in my head. Today, I feel truly happy to have that freedom."

At the Frieze London fair last October, Kamel Mennour, her Paris gallerist, turned his entire booth over to Ms. Henrot, who produced cartoonlike watercolors illustrating everyday human concerns — knotted hair, a leaking trash bag — as well as figures masturbating in front of their computer screens. The



She's "constantly searching, experimenting, and trying to express a thought in the clearest and most precise way possible."

watercolors sold well, as did a large abstract sculpture that, Mr. Mennour confirmed, sold for \$200,000.

Critics have been upbeat about her work, if occasionally overwhelmed by its scope.

"Sound and image achieve an unusually precise and gripping, even fugue-like syncopation," Roberta Smith of The

New York Times said in reviewing "Grosse fatigue" at the 2014 New Museum show.

Adrian Searle of The Guardian praised her "great feel for shape, surface, form and scale, drama and surprise" at an exhibition at Chisenhale Gallery in London that same year. Yet he also noted that her art "entertains contradiction and several different ways of working and thinking," and concluded, "There is too much going on to make sense of it all."

After reading a critical review, Ms. Henrot said, "I suffer like hell for a few days, ruminating." But she said that she had realized with experience that a too-

positive review "means you are not moving any lines" or boundaries.

As a child, Ms. Henrot was a devotee of Japanese manga. She subsequently studied animation at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and went on to make television cartoons and commercials.

On the side, she shot experimental films. One such film led the Galerie Dominique Fiat here to give Ms. Henrot her first exhibition, "Room Movies," in 2005.

She was nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp, which recognizes innovation in French art, in 2010, but her failure to win proved a blessing. On a friend's advice, she moved to New York.

"If I had won the prize, I would have felt recognized in my own country," she said. "I might have had a show at the Pompidou Center, and I wouldn't have been able to leave."

On arrival in New York, Ms. Henrot said, "I felt uprooted. I was like a cut flower."

Flowers figured prominently in the

next phase of her career. Having recently composed bouquets for a funeral and discovering the consoling power of flowers, Ms. Henrot embarked on a project to create ikebana bouquets that evoked books from her personal library.

Okwui Enwezor, the artistic director of the 2012 Paris Triennale, invited Ms. Henrot to produce a version of the bouquets for his exhibition, where they caught the eye of Mr. Gioni of the New Museum.

“Camille is never where you expect her to be,” Mr. Mennour said. “She’s an artist who’s constantly searching, experimenting, and trying to express a thought in the clearest and most precise way possible.”

By the time Ms. Henrot met Mr. Gioni to discuss the Venice Biennale exhibition he was curating, she had secured a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship in Washington and was planning the film that would become “Grosse fatigue.” Reading the script was enough to persuade Mr. Gioni to include her.

Set to a rap poem, “Grosse fatigue” is a mash-up of narratives about creation, whether rooted in religion and science or borrowed from African tribes and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Images flash by, everything from dead birds, snails and fish (from the Smithsonian’s storerooms) to African figurines to living turtles to fresco fragments to computer screens, smartphones and tablets.

“Grosse fatigue’ encapsulates the 21st century on every level,” Mr. Gioni said, including “the use of the internet, the computer itself being a medium and a subject of the video, and this idea of extremes of data and knowledge that are so vast that they are at the same time frightening and sublime.”

Ms. Henrot’s next big exhibition will be at the vast Palais de Tokyo in Paris in the fall of 2017. It will illustrate the human propensity toward dependency — on love, cigarettes, alcohol, pets or technology, she said.

Mr. Gioni said he was confident that Ms. Henrot would continue to deliver surprises as an artist. “Camille is very young,” he said. “At the same time, she has had a few lives already.”

