

„My art should not only be beautiful, my art should hurt“



Dana Pandici, born in 1967, lives as a free-lance artist in the region of Heidelberg (Germany). The Romanian born artist did not tie herself down to one genre or technique – she shoots photographs, paints, sculptures and designs fashion. She talks here with Barbara Imgrund about herself and her art.

Barbara Imgrund: Mrs. Pandici, you won the third prize with two photographs in January 2014, in the very prestigious competition „La tua arte nel sociale“ (Your art in the social field), organized by the Roman Galery Il Collezionista. The competition was stiff, 1,050 artists had sent in their work. I congratulate you on this achievement.

Dana Pandici: Thank you very much, indeed.

B.I.: Your both photographs evolution – the madonna of the future and human trafficking from the series Being alive is a privilege – human dignity against cynicism are like a kick in the teeth .The same woman twice facing hieratically the camera from a black backcloth: once with a bleeding sheep’s head on her lap and the other time naked, tied with red ribbons. The second picture was actually on exhibition in the Biennale in Rome. Your art should hurt, shouldn’t it?



evolution - the madonna of the future

industrialization, pollution, infertility, dolly.

cloning - the next status symbol. it is happening because we have the technology, there is no stopping that.



human trafficking

2.4 million people across the globe are victims of human trafficking at any one time, and 80 percent of them are being exploited as **sexual slaves**. some marriage agencies makes women trafficking easier.

D.P.: This is what I expect from my art. (*Laughs.*) Seriously speaking: Yes, I want to put the finger on the wound. I do not want to reveal the beautiful appearance, but the ugly face of reality. In *human trafficking*, it is not only the prostitute meant with the red ribbons — plenty of other women must sell themselves. I know enough Thai women who were ordered on catalogue by their western husbands-to-be! Well, in case of mutual affection, there is of course, nothing to comment on it. However, if the women are obliged to do so since they don't see other ways of making a living, this appears to be beneath their dignity. One should talk about this. This should become a topic. My pictures should initiate such reflections and such talks.

B.I.: And what upon should abut Madonna with the bleeding sheep's head?

D.P.: The sheep's head should remind us all of Dolly, the first cloned sheep in the world. Nowadays, with the pollution, the stress and the hectic rhythm of life, infertility is on permanent rise. What are we doing? We buy ourselves out of the childlessness, going for reproductive medicine. Although it is expensive and it is accessible only to the ones who bring the cash, it is an unfair and a dangerous situation. This means nothing else then „tinkering out“ our own children. I wonder if we have this DIY situation really under control. Where should this all end? I wish the beholder of my art would ask himself / herself the same questions.

B.I.: How did these pictures come about? Did you have a blueprint in your mind? Did you stick to the plan that had already been shaped beforehand in your mind or was it a birth all of a sudden?

D.P.: First of all: I also do *l'art pour l'art*, art out of an aesthetic choice. Nevertheless, trained in and graduating from an art high school I was inoculated with a concept of an art, which has always something to say. I still feel committed to it nowadays. In case of such talking artworks, there is always an idea in the beginning. For the **Madonna** I knew exactly what I wanted to communicate and then I searched for the strongest possible means to express the purpose. The observer should understand on the spot what I mean. As with the language, where the author searches for the best words to express his mind – but the words are not there on their own, they are the means for the purpose.

The real creation process occurs before the shooting. I draw a mind map, mainly half in Romanian, half in German, and this mind map is constantly branching itself off. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and fasten my sudden idea onto the map, which lies on my night table. Otherwise, it fades away.

On the mind map, I state different alternatives and I leave dough to sit. For the sculpture, which is now in progress, the whole draft process lasted for almost three

quarters of a year. Only then, when the concept is coherent for me, do I bring up the question of the feasibility techniques. In this case, I have chosen wire. For me, the aesthetic conversion is always subordinated to the statement, to the message - my main preoccupation being not “HOW”, but “WHAT”.

The execution comes about actually quite quickly. I have already everything in my head and try to leave aside all parasite thinking and to concentrate myself on the essential. The photo shooting from *human trafficking* took, with all light tests and everything, two to three hours. The bonding had not been thoroughly planned; the result came out of the momentary process.

B.I.: How did you “get” to art? Was art always a part of your life?

D.P.: At home, in Timisoara (Romania) I was always keen on arts. My father is a physicist and since I was a five years old girl, I have soldered and played with wire, crafting adornments or candleholders. He recently reminded me this. I have always had an artisan vein. I knew how to sew before I went to school. I cannot be out of arts. Even if I only paint a wall, I consider it artistically done. That is I. I cannot stop it and I do not want to stop it.

It came naturally to me, that after my primary school I went on with my education at an art school, up to the graduation. After my school years, all this “ art – thing” bothered me. We did so much art, that I could not stand it anymore and I stopped doing it. I was in an interior conflict that the others study medicine and earn a lot of money with their studies and I couldn’t do that with mine.

D.P.: I came to Germany in 1990 together with my husband and his family, which is half-German. In Romania, we studied 12 years for the high-school graduation and in Germany, there were 13 years, so I had to do a compensatory year, where I chose maths as a major on purpose, because I wanted to overcome my complex of inferiority. After my graduation in Germany, everything became possible. Therefore, there was no excuse anymore not to study medicine or some other science subject. I

started to work as a computer technician.

B.I.: So you did not take an artistic path.

D.P.: One has to find his peace of mind to express art. When we arrived in Germany, I didn't find mine. I didn't know a single word of German and it took me a long time to speak it fluently and start to work... It took me time to find art again, to become myself again.

B.I.: Did you suffer from the culture and language clash?

D.P.: Not only this. In Romania, I earned a lot more money than my father did and I used to spend a lot more money than I had available here, in Germany. To survive in Heidelberg was my first priority, to find myself here. It wasn't easy. But since I work as an independent Web designer and earn my own money, even if it is little, I have found my peace and I can muster my abilities; I can dedicate myself seriously to arts. Nevertheless, it took time until I could take this liberty.

Three years ago, I started to exhibit my creations: painting, sculptures, and clothes. Still, I didn't see myself as an artist - it was just I. Even in my pieces of art, it is still I.

B.I.: Do you have a deeper message to express about your art or is it more a hawking about a theme that you present?

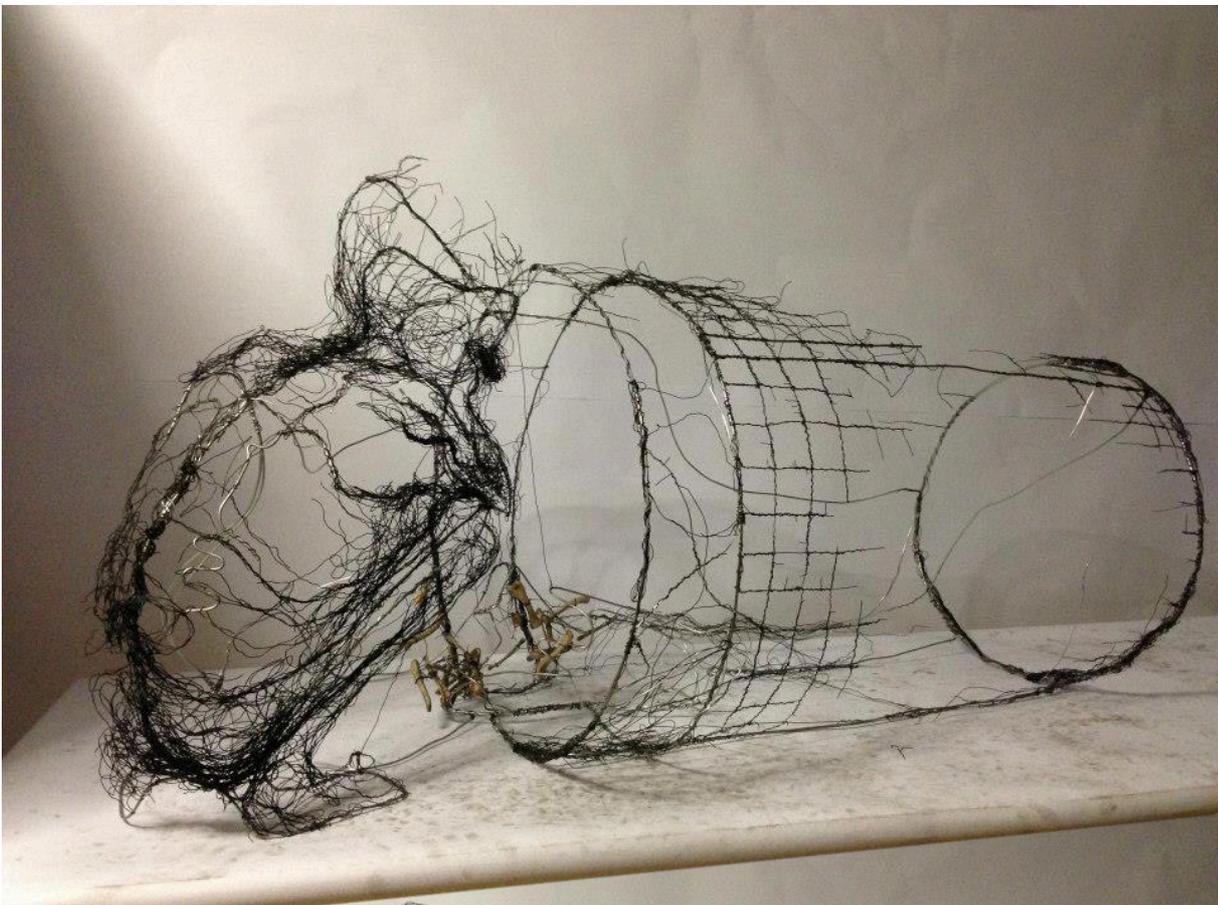
D.P.: The ideas, the themes come and go. I have no planning.

B.I.: You already named your present work „Suffering and Ache – irreversible war consequences“. You sent a sculpture in wire for the Austrian Peace Prize 2014 to the Monastery of Neuburg. This important competition stays this year under the biblical motto “Am I my brother's keeper?” (1. Moses 4,9). Why did

you decide to exhibit a sculpture, a sculpture in wire, this time?

D.P.: It comes always intuitively to me. I knew out of my womb that it would be a sculpture. I didn't even think of anything else. The only question was, how I should make it? First, I had on my mind a starving child, sitting on the ground, imagined as a photograph. I thought it should also be a waste disposal bin in my sculpture, knocked over, where he looks through. I did some sketches. They were supposed to show the wire path. I left it to sit for a while, to see if it still represents me after all.

It still was the case. So, I formed by bending the wire sculpture frame on a bigger scale. It took a quarter of an hour. I had the line-up already in my head: I took a series of pictures from the sculpture development. I think that, not only the ready sculpture is of interest, but its development as well. Overall, it took me a fortnight to finish the process.



B.I.: When will we know about results?

D.P.: At the end of April, I sent in a photograph of the sculpture. In August, we will know who the nominated artists are. On September 26th the opening of the exhibition takes place for all the nominated works. If one is nominated, it is already a win; it will be shown on the exhibition. That's my aim. I hope to win as well. *(Laughs)*.

B.I.: And a last question: How could you describe your art?

D.P.: My art strikes one on the spot. It is clear, explicit, pure, with no twirls, no bells or whistles and could as well – should as well – hurt! My art should „do“ something for its observer. It should touch him; it should trigger something in him. I use many clichés. The clichés are not bad in themselves. They come from our experience and help us to prioritise, to create working hypotheses... One single thing remains the most important for me: I must always be able to stand for my art. Even when and mostly when it is uncomfortable.

For more information about Dana Pandici, visit www.danapandici.com

Interview done by Barbara Imgrund (www.barbara-imgrund.de)



About the Author

Barbara Imgrund has a master's degree in German literature and is a freelance editor, translator, author and writing coach. Apart from good texts and art, her love is dedicated to animals and nature – two inclinations she combines in her publications and her blog [die wüsten:monologe](http://die.wuesten:monologe), where she writes about her volunteering experiences in African conservancy on a regular basis. In her opinion, it is our duty to speak up instead of watching speechlessly the Earth go down. www.barbara-imgrund.de