

Ana Priscila Rodriguez

From January 9 to February 8, visual artist Ana Priscila Rodriguez will be exhibiting in Galerie 44. The title of the exhibition, *The Red Line*, refers to a red line, point, sign, which is present in every work of Priscila, connects her works with each other and symbolizes life, pain or whatever other meaning the viewer wants to give to it.

Priscila was born in Mexico City and it was her dream from childhood to become an artist. She says that she could draw before she could write and that as a child she was given no dolls but craft materials. However, she went on to study history, because she was not admitted to the only art academy in Mexico. She has no regrets about this study in retrospect, she has always benefited from the intellectual background she obtained through it and the historical periods in which she has immersed herself inspire her to this day, especially the Middle Ages and Romanticism. In 1998, Priscila ended up in Spijkenisse through her first husband, a transition that was certainly not easy for her at first, but thanks to the many courses she followed in 't Oude Raadhuis van Spijkenisse (including photography, oil painting, ceramics), she found her way, not least because of the artist couple Petra and Wim Adema who took her under their wing and encouraged her to take the entrance exam for the Utrecht School of the Arts. They have been her support and confidante to this day. Priscila was immediately accepted at the HKU and the years there were golden years for her; this was what she had always wanted and here she discovered that her heart did not lie in drawing and painting, for which she was accepted, but in photography and mixed media, an art form in which different art media are used alongside and through each other.

Priscila graduated cum laude in Photography and Mixed Media with background studies in History and Graphic Design. However, making a living through art proved difficult, so Priscila started working full-time as a secretary. She could only devote herself to her art in her spare time, a situation she eventually found completely unsatisfying. She missed the depth, the soul, the concept behind her work and the contacts with other artists. In search of kindred spirits, she started posting her work on a blog on Facebook, and this blog took off enormously. At one point, she had more than 300,000 followers and developed into a kind of curator, because many other artists also wanted to exhibit their work on her blog. In this way, Priscila got to know many artists and photographers, built up a huge network, and most importantly, found her old drive again and started making new work. At the same time, she was given more and more opportunities to exhibit, both at home and abroad. All these developments led Priscila to decide to stop working after a burnout so that she could devote herself entirely to her art, thanks to the support of her husband.

Priscila has been a full-time artist since 2021. She works conceptually, from an idea or a story that she has in mind and that she expresses in her photos. Priscila places herself in the tradition of Romanticism and the English Pre-Raphaelites. Her work is mystical, mythological and religious, it is a magical realm, based on feelings and stories: the stories of life, stories of women, a long-lost past, lost loves, vistas, images. Priscila tries to give shape to these stories in a different way, like a fairy tale, you have to be able to get a message out of it.

In the past, she used old postcards as a source of inspiration for her work, but she no longer finds that interesting. Priscilla finds a lot of inspiration in Finland, her husband's country of birth. Finnish nature, forests and stories inspire her and in the photos she takes here she often uses herself as a model. However, this does not mean that it is about or about her, Priscila emphasizes. She is only a model and makes herself unrecognizable by using certain techniques and mediums and edits the photos until it is as if a painting has been created: baroque, romantic, pre-Raphaelite. Priscila proudly shows us her studio

and kingdom in the attic. The walls are full of photos, drawings and everything that inspires her and is meaningful to her, and there is her computer and ingenious partly self-designed devices with which she manipulates her photos, although the end result always remains photographic.

Priscila works in series whose titles reveal something about the stories she wants to tell ('the darkness in Light', 'The Walker', 'The Anatomy of Love') and the individual photo's also have a title. Her mission is to give these silent stories a voice and a body so that they can continue to live in real time, in a new form. In her work, as in all art, she emphasizes, it is about transformation, she tells stories, fairy tales.

Priscila is now a very successful artist. She exhibits a lot at home, but especially abroad and has won numerous prizes, awards and honourable mentions. But despite her background and the international interest in her work, Priscila explicitly considers herself a Dutch artist: because thanks to the opportunities she received here, she is who she is now. Priscilla is a member of Pulchri Studio and Stroom and is a highly valued employee of Galerie 44.

In the exhibition, Priscilla exhibits new work, a new series, also mixed-media, collage-like work that is integrated with photography. They are life stories, "stories with a history, because everything has a past and a future and to see our human soul with our eyes wide open, we have to look at our past and keep moving forward." And in everything Priscila exhibits, The Red Line is a constant, connecting her works – and the viewer who recognizes himself in her story is free to give it his own meaning.

Hetty Burgers (Galerie 44)