

The Dutch Mistress



From champion gymnast to one of the most exciting artistic talents in London, Anouk Van Tetering is the name on everybody's lips, thanks to a distinct style that is both seductive and full of pizzazz.

by Kirsten Beith

"You always want to be something your parents are," says Anouk Van Tetering sitting cross-legged on a couch in a cosy flat somewhere in Holland Park. Four months pregnant and the woman is positively glowing. She doesn't look a day over twenty-two, with perfect skin and a wide-eyed, almost mischievous, sometimes cynical demeanour. But despite her childlike appearance, Anouk is not in her early twenties. She's a shot away from thirty, and is fast becoming one of the most talked about visual manipulative artists in Europe today.

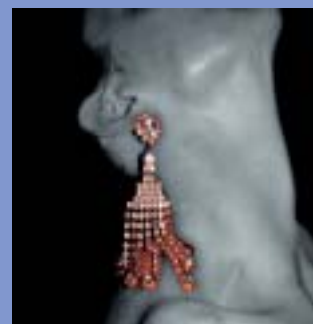
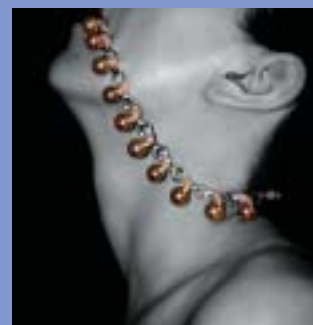
"My mother is an artist, my grandfather was an artist, and my father was a plastic surgeon. Since I was born, I was always in my mother's studio. She gave me a little corner where I could paint, and after school I always went to the atelier," she says, briefly breaking into her native Dutch tongue.

Born in The Hague in 1975, Anouk displayed talents within various sections of the arts, and spent much of her early life working as a professional gymnast. Becoming the Dutch Champion in 1991 she, perhaps unsurprisingly, found herself working as a dancer in ballets and shows in Holland. However, it was following a brief flirtation with film production, that she

bagged herself a place at Amsterdam's prestigious Gerrit Rietveld Academy in 1995.

"It was always, am I going to the dance academy, or am I going to the art academy? I never knew what to choose," she says. Yet despite her confusion, Anouk made her decision and became a student at Rietveld, later taking things further by heading across the sea to study at London's own Chelsea School of Art.

Although Anouk confesses that she didn't like either of them much because of their teaching methods. "Their theory is that you have to learn something yourself, otherwise

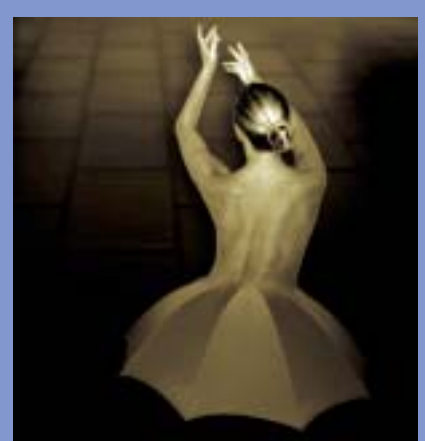


you have to use the technique of a teacher, so you don't have that free spirit to explore your own imagery."

Undeterred by these troubles, Anouk dealt with things in her own way. "Nobody knew how to use a computer, so I decided to do photo manipulation - and because nobody knew anything about it, they couldn't say bad things about me."

At first, Anouk's pieces tended to reflect her environment. Dark and often disturbing, she blended the features of humans with man-made trimmings. Teddy bear's eyes merged onto faces and bodies, granting the viewer a confusing but provocative experience. These days, her work is far more receptive, and Anouk has ultimately come into her own. She's proved herself to be a versatile artist, producing works that are aesthetical, sensual and comical, with a touch of glamour thrown in for good measure. Black and white images are fused by a sharp onslaught of intense colour donated by way of props such as DeBeers diamonds, Mikimoto pearls or a plain but productive floppy straw hat.

"There is a thin line between fashion photography and conceptual photography. I don't see



that line and I don't want to see it," Anouk states with absolute confidence. Certainly, this crossover in fields means the imagery she creates is easy to appreciate on several different levels and evokes a mix of reactions from appreciation to indulgence.

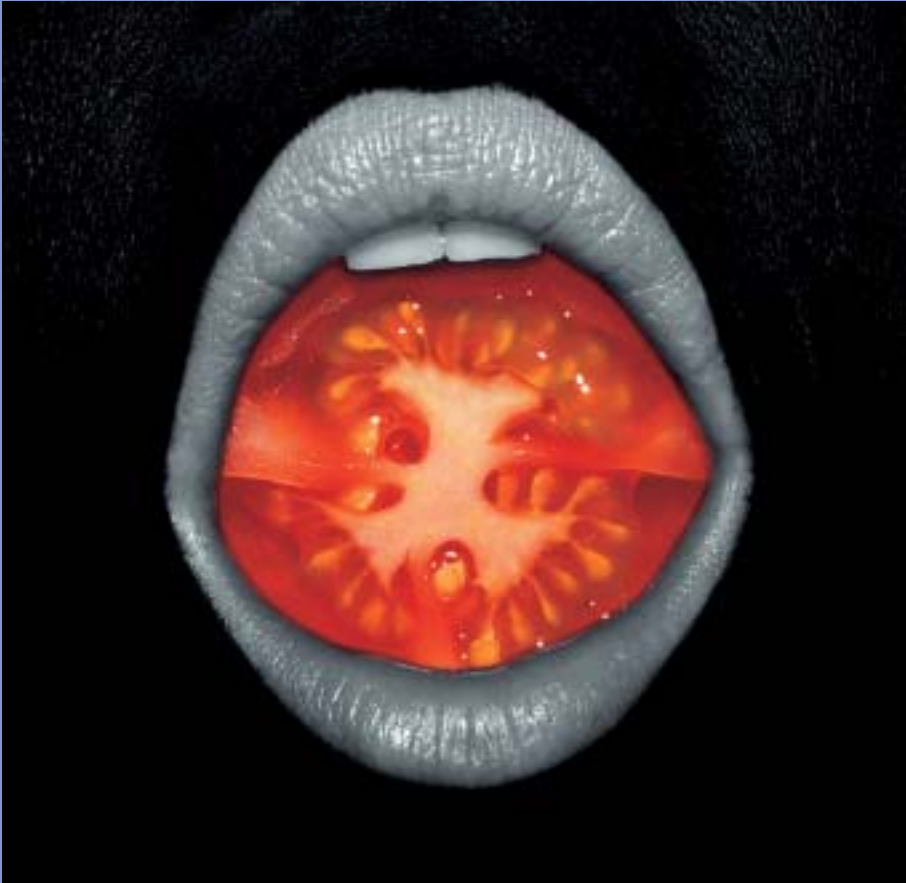
One recent series involved images of arched feet wrapped around bright red and green apples. The thought behind their structure was simple and smart, and stemmed from a ballet that Anouk saw as a teenager, when the Dutch choreographer, Jiri Kylian, used the fruit as a prop.

"He put wooden blocks behind the dancers feet, so people thought they were walking on the apples," she explains. "It was always in the back of my mind. Then I thought it would be great to do a whole series with apples."

With a background in, and passion for, gymnastics and dance, it comes as little surprise to hear that almost all of Anouk's pictures incorporate the female form in some way, and for perhaps this reason they're even more sensual.

"I take photographs of mainly female bodies because I think they're more seductive than male bodies," she states. "I have had offers from men," she chuckles, "but I always say no." Still, don't be fooled into thinking her talent is about titillation. It's not. "Every idea has a different meaning," she says, adding, "I am more like a designer. I pick up a concept, and then I have a whole series with that concept."

There's a certain amount of truth in this statement. Because of its stylish edge and erotic charm, Anouk's art hangs perfectly in swish, swanky bars, clubs and restaurants across the Capital. In recent months she has exhibited at Aura and the Oxo Tower, while



currently her pictures hang in the Firehouse. This summer the London Art Bar and private members club Adam Street, will be adding their names to the list. And these are just the London venues for her exhibitions. Yet these are the places, which have found a place in Anouk's heart since making the Capital her home in 2000.

"I felt very lonely for the first two or three weeks," she admits. "Then my mother said, well, I have a friend who has a daughter who lives in London, why don't you give her a call?" Anouk did as her mum suggested, and the pair became fast friends. Things were on the up and that very same week she also met her husband to be.

"We fell in love, and the longer we stayed the better we liked the place. Now I wouldn't dream of going back to Holland. It's too small. Every one knows each other, everyone is gossiping all the time. But here you can have four different lives. Here you have more freedom," she says grinning. "I love the politeness here. I love the way that people wait for a zebra (crossing). And you can cross without looking! If we did that in Amsterdam, people would shout at you. They'd call you bad names!" she laughs, continuing, "I love the many good restaurants. I'm a big fan of good food and you can eat anywhere you want here. My favourite restaurant is Zuma and we are always drinking cocktails at Lam Long. Now, I am drinking pina coladas without the alcohol. My favourite," she grins, a little cheeky, a little sweet and a little shrewd – a little like her work.

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