

MAKING AN IMPRESSION

FROM THE ALGARVE TO THE GRIMMS' FAIRY TALES, ARTIST GUDRUN BARTELS' INTERESTS ARE AS DIVERSE AS HER ART

PHOTOS ANABELA GASPAR



German painter Gudrun Bartels is very much inspired by nature and culture, as well as graphic patterns and colour impressions. Talking about her creative process, the Bremen-born artist explains that she likes to keep a mental archive of images, like her memories of hikes in the mountains or on the beach, which she then “summons” when in front of a canvas.

It is no surprise then that Gudrun, whose paintings are vibrant and incredibly diverse, thinks of the Algarve as a prolific working ground, a place filled with inspiring landscapes where she not only finds time for some much-needed rest and relaxation, but also to paint, teach art lessons and work with local schools.

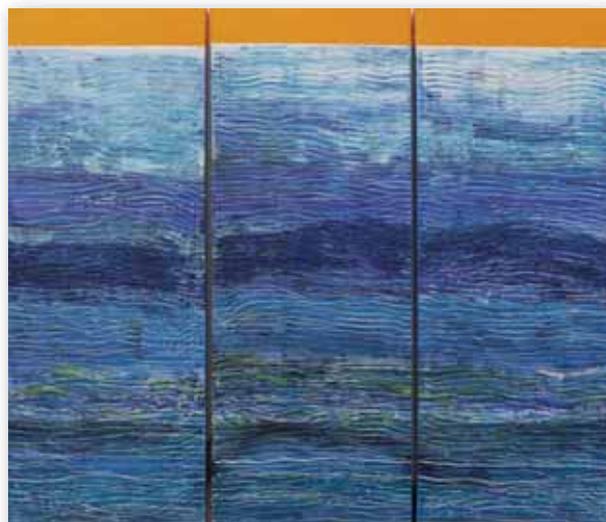
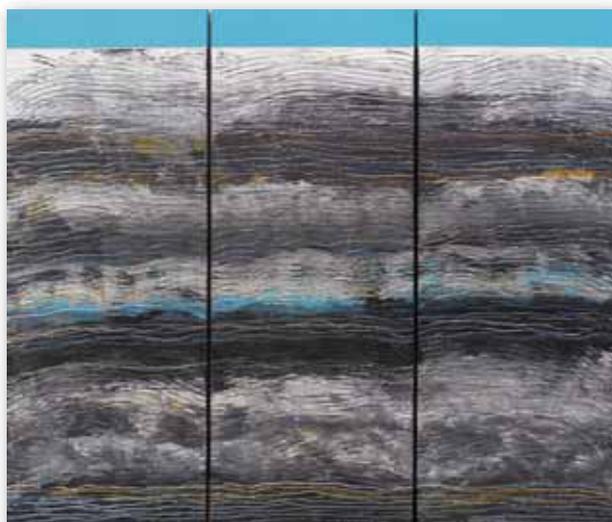
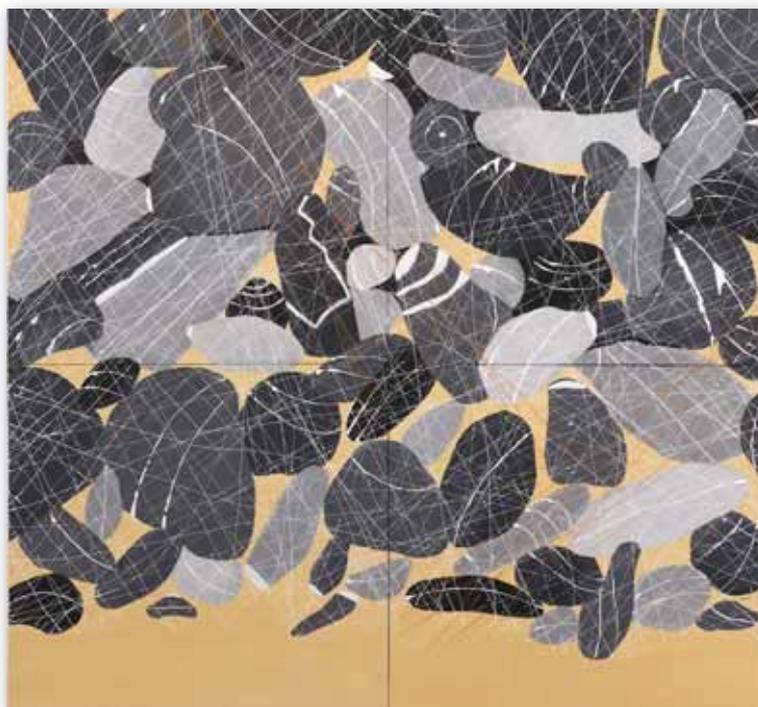
It is these very impressions that the artist is showcasing until mid-May in an exhibition fittingly entitled *Impressões* at the Antigos Paços do Concelho, in Lagos. Comprising paintings, collages and prints, in a total of 50 works, Gudrun describes the exhibit as a collection of “various impressions, using different media and techniques”. Mixing different materials has always been her comfort zone. The artist enjoys experimenting with acrylics, pastels, pigment powders and paper, amongst others, and is also a keen

photographer. The result of such experimentations, she says, is “painting on the borderline between order and chaos” by using the images she stores in her mind and adapting them to create her own vision. “Sometimes, there’s not much left from the original image,” she says.

Explaining the difference between painting and photography in her artwork, Gudrun notes that painting is her

artistic medium of expression, whilst photography helps her to “firmly hold impressions” and gives “some guidance to the viewer” of her paintings. “It amuses me to experiment with colours and see how an image has evolved on canvas,” she says. Since she works with several techniques, the time she takes to complete an artwork can also vary immensely: a painting can take anywhere between one or two days or three weeks to be completed.

Having visited Portugal for the first time in 1975, whilst on holiday, Gudrun’s first exhibition in the country was held at Lagoa’s Convento de São José, in 2010. The display was also a reflection of the artist’s close link to the Algarve, which she has visited every year since 1990, and where she has exhibited on numerous occasions. The painter spends two to four months per year in the Monchique mountains, where





her partner owns a small house, combining “vacation with work”, as she puts it.

But whilst she currently turns to the Algarve for inspiration, it was her parents who first got her interested in art. “My father was a good draughtsman and my mother took me to exhibitions when I was a child,” she recalls. “I grew up in Bremen, where there is a large museum of modern art with a picture by Picasso. The picture fascinated me and stimulated my interest in modern art.” Her curiosity was even more piqued after she began working at a bookstore, where she was responsible for the art department. After leaving the job, Gudrun went on to study



art at the University of Göttingen, between Bonn and Berlin. Göttingen is the hometown of the Grimm brothers, famous for their fairy tales books, which led her to another of her greatest interests: stories and illustrations. In 1998, she helped create Goettinger Maerchenland e.V., an association involved in the research of fables and fairy tales. Up to this day, this is still one of her favourite subjects, and she explores it extensively whilst teaching classes. For now, she is making her impression in Lagos: *Impressões* can be viewed

Monday to Friday (9am-5pm), at the Antigos Paços do Concelho, in the Praça Gil Eanes, until May 13. ■