



Michelle Marie, A Modern Day Renaissance Woman

By: Roger Webster

Michelle Marie is a wife, mother, painter, musician, gardener, decorator, athlete and philanthropist. She grew up in Atlanta, has lived in Paris and now with her husband Jon L. Heinemann, maintains several homes in the Northeast: an apartment on 5th Avenue, a manor house on the Hudson River, and a place on the sea at Kennebunkport, Maine. Last October, Michelle and Jon gave birth to a bouncing eight pound baby boy they named Hudson Cornelius. They are an extremely happy family.

The happiness is reflected in Michelle Marie's artistic endeavors. After purchasing the 35-room manor house upstate, she caught the gardening bug and has since devoted endless hours to her botanical pursuits. "I just can't tear myself away from my flowers. It's something that I truly enjoy." She and Jon are also avid collectors of art and antiques. "Every item we buy has a provenance," she says with the authority of a true connoisseur.

Marie has recorded two albums. Her vocal cover of the Ricky Nelson classic, Garden Party reached number 13 on Billboard's Hot Adult Contemporary charts. She plays piano, guitar, harp and the pan flute. "I see music as another form of artistic expression, and I wouldn't want to be limited to one type of art," Marie says. "It was fun, but I realized that I enjoyed making music more when I did it simply for my own enjoyment. So I've turned my full attention to my work as a painter."

The artist made an impressive debut in New York City with a show entitled "Old Beauty Queens" at Gallery 54. The exhibition drew raves for its layered paintings portraying past-their-prime debutantes and beauty queens. Marie adorned these creations with precious and semiprecious stones to enhance the effect. "People responded so positively to the paintings, and the show was so well received, that it became a defining moment in my career," she says.

"I especially enjoy art in which emotional content takes precedence over form," says Marie, who studied Rococo art with a private instructor in Paris but now admits to an affinity towards expressionism. "In those works you get a true reflection of the artist." In Marie's colorful oil painting "Model in the Studio #2," which appeared on the cover of Gallery Guide magazine, the work's central figure, a young man, rests on a chaise and peers evocatively out at those viewing the piece. The man is surrounded by hundreds of vibrant squares bursting with fiery shades of red, blue and yellow that combine with the figure in the foreground to create an unmistakable emotional resonance.

Beginning in the fall of 2006, Marie's paintings will be featured in a year-long exhibition at the luxurious Hotel Carl Gustaf on the Caribbean island of St. Barts. Her collection entitled "Winter Trees on Oak Paneled Boxes" will be the exhibition's focal point. The strikingly intricate paintings feature an array of geometric triangles fit together to form tree canopies that seem to flutter and shift right before the eye. "If you study the triangles, they begin to move and create an optical illusion because of how I've positioned them," she says. Her inspiration for the idea, aside from the sight of snow-capped trees from an airplane window, was mathematics. "I was having a detailed discussion with a professor of mathematics and I thought, 'Eureka, I'm going to incorporate math into my work'" she recalls. "I came home and started working on various equations, which have to be exactly right in order to create the illusion. Otherwise, it's just a bunch of triangles."

Michelle founded the charity Blankets for Warmth four years ago in order to assist the homeless during the winter months. The impetus for this came one day when she was struck by the sight of a beautiful young girl alone, and cold, outside a restaurant she was exiting. "It stopped me in my tracks," Marie recalls. "I gave her the coat off my back and some money. The next day I went to an army surplus store and bought all the blankets they had and distributed them to individuals in need throughout the city. After that, things got rolling on an annual basis."

Blankets for Warmth now has a dedicated staff of employees and maintains six vans. In partnership with the Coalition for the Homeless, they distribute thousands of blankets to the needy, each winter. It is very satisfying for Marie. "This allows me to make a difference one person at a time." She hopes to expand the program to other cities next year and will spearhead charity art auctions to help garner additional awareness and financial support.

For more information please visit <http://www.michellemarieart.com>

Michelle Marie reminds me of the Bob Dylan song,
She Belongs to Me.

*She's got everything she needs,
She's an artist, she don't look back.
She can take the dark out of the nighttime
And paint the daytime black.*



"Winter Tree on Oak Paneled Box #1"



Jon L. Heinemann and Michelle Marie

