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Beirut bloom

Floral burst in the Levant

Flowers On clothes, in paintings and everywhere else **Fashion** Spring's irresistible style **Design** Mid-Century Japan, Art Deco Shanghai
Art Carla Tolomeo, Marc Quinn and Larry Gagosian **Travel** New York like you've never seen it before



Color my world

By Kirsten Vance

Dutch artist Caroline Dechamby infuses her work with bold strokes of happiness

It's the bold use of color that first strikes you when looking at the work of artist Caroline Dechamby. The oversized images on her canvases have been painted with bright, cheerful and colorful brush strokes, creating pictures that give viewers an uplifting experience. Hers is definitely happy art.

"I do what I think is nice. It has positive energy. I work a lot with colors. That is the strength of my work," says Dechamby, who has been painting for 25 years.

Her series of flower paintings exemplifies this mood perfectly: white tulips, multicolored tulips, red roses, multicolored roses, anthuriums and poppies. All are blossoming with color, life and renewal, and are rather fitting for a springtime viewing. Indeed these and other pop art from the Dutch-born artist will be on display this April at Q Contemporary gallery in Downtown Beirut.

Other than her great use of color, one of Dechamby's trademarks is

that she often paints herself into her canvases. While some have called it narcissistic, she says it's just one of the things that makes her art distinctive.

Dechamby says that her unique style of pop art was influenced partly by Belgian surrealist painter René Magritte, who is probably most famous for "The Son of Man." She is also an admirer of Salvador Dali. While surrealism was not what Dechamby wanted to do, she was nonetheless fascinated by it.

Having grown up in an artistic home – her mother was a painter and her father an architect – Dechamby's creative talent is perhaps no surprise. However, she initially thought that a career in art was not for her. She saw her mother working by herself and considered art a lonely endeavor.

But Dechamby was evidently born with a gift. "It eventually became a passion, and something that I can't live without," she says.

The painter is in high demand. Dechamby has patrons from around the world. As one of the lucky few living artists to be celebrated and to reap the benefits of her art, every day she disproves the rule that artists only become famous and their work valuable post mortem.

"But that's not the point," she says. "It's to have enough money to do what I like, not to be famous or rich." And Dechamby is happy when she's in her atelier painting. Also unusual for an artist, Dechamby has her gallery next to her studio in the resort town Crans-Montana, where she lives with her husband and two children. Surrounded by beautiful vistas in the Swiss mountains, it's little wonder that hers is happy art.

View Caroline Dechamby's "Mise en Scène" exhibit from April 7-30 at Q Contemporary, Beirut Tower, Zeitouny St., Downtown Beirut, tel. 03.300.520, www.qcontemporary.com