

**CHRISTINE SEFOLOSHA:
TIMELESS WANDERER**

photos by Mario Del Curto; texts by Roger Cardinal, Sébastien Dizerens, Monika Jagfeld, Randall Morris and Leslie Umberger.

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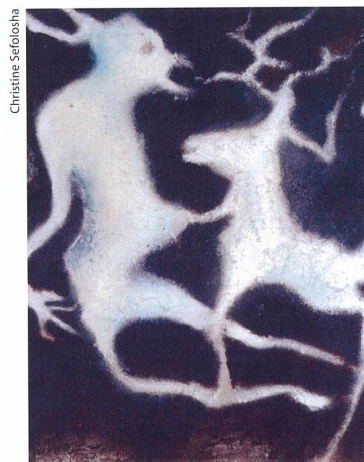
I've been beguiled and haunted by Swiss artist Christine Sefolosh's work from the time I was introduced to it in a New York gallery show about

70 RAW VISION 91

15 years ago. Her darkly shadowed, murkily expressionistic images of hybrid animals, humanoid shape-shifters, massive oceangoing vessels and urban skylines cast a potent visual spell that implants them in the mind, where they have a way of lingering long after they're out of sight.

There's a strongly nocturnal feeling to the work, which for me brings to mind ever shifting visions observed in darkly boiling clouds or plumes of drifting smoke. Through her paintings and drawings, Sefolosh projects into the phenomenal world a vast, mysterious psychological space, enabling viewers to share in her explorations and discoveries. This seemingly limitless terrain is nothing more nor less than her own mind, rooted deeply in archetypal, visionary terrain. It's a region to which we all have our points of access, but few pay enough attention to know it, fewer still choose to venture there, and only the most relentless, deep-diving seekers return to our familiar world with such compelling visual evidence of their findings.

Absent opportunities to see Sefolosh's art firsthand, this monograph provides a superb introduction, not the least because it's primarily a visual book produced in a large format (24.5 x 32 cm). The vast majority of its 208 pages are filled with beautifully reproduced, full-colour, full-bleed images of her work and of her at work in her studio. The



Christine Sefolosh

remainder is devoted to commentary on Sefolosh and her art by a select international group of authorities in the field of art brut. Leading off the texts is a sensitively conducted, informative interview with Sefolosh by British art and literary scholar Roger Cardinal (whose seminal book *Outsider Art* was originally titled *Art brut* before the publisher decreed the title change).

Unfortunately my once-serviceable French-language skills have atrophied from lack of use, and I've never learned German, so I'm unable to efficiently read the essays by Sébastien Dizerens and Monika Jagfeld. But I have read the book's English-language texts, consisting of essays by two of the strongest American voices in the field, Randall Morris and Leslie Umberger, whose comments never fail to illuminate the creative subject under discussion. Morris and his wife Shari Cavin Morris are longtime owner/operator/curators at Cavin-Morris Gallery, where my first sighting of Sefolosh's work took place. He writes about art like the poet he is, not like an academic, which he isn't, although he's as deeply informed and articulate as the best of them. The latter category certainly includes Leslie Umberger, senior curator of folk and self-taught at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Renwick Gallery, is a first-order scholar and engaging writer.

Tom Patterson

