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Photographer Micky Hoogendijk sees in dreams Dutch-born Austinite layers portraits to reveal the vulnerable

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BY [MICHAEL BARNES](#) - AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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A figure drapes a jeweled, chain-metal mesh over his pale features. Lower in the frame, black leather gloves half cover fingers tipped with roughened nails.

Below a white fringe of hair, the subject's eyes reflect deep, unaffected sadness. The lips are parted slightly, as if prepared to speak some line of elegiac poetry.



MICKY HOOGENDIJK

"Death Becomes Her," a portrait of writer and designer Stephen Moser, is perhaps Micky Hoogendijk's most famous image.

Just as arresting are the image's title, "Death Becomes Her;" and its subject, fashion designer and former columnist Stephen Moser, who has survived a diagnosis of terminal cancer for more than six years. He is currently under hospice care.

"His story deeply touched me, and this portrait is my tribute to him," says photographer Micky

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Hoogendijk, who often uses Photoshop to enhance her large, haunting portraits. "I did not need any layers in this photo; this is the raw, real image. Again a mask, a veneer. Very symbolic."

Dutch-born Hoogendijk, 43, a former model and actress, has been around art all her life. Her second father was a painter, her mother an interior designer. Her first husband, Rob Scholte, is a globetrotting postmodern artist, the Lowlands answer to Jeff Koons.



Photographer and actress Micky Hoogendijk with her image of model My-Cherie Haley.

Now married to famed entrepreneur, podcaster and former MTV VJ Adam Curry, Hoogendijk recently exhibited her photos alongside Peggy Weiss's dreamlike photos and collages at the Davis Gallery.

Yet many of them, including "Death Becomes Her;" have circulated in the media for months.

Although firmly based here, Hoogendijk (pronounced HOOGEN-DIKE in this

country) is just as likely to sell her work in Japan or the Netherlands as in Austin or New York City. As one might expect from the images, she's led a life of incident.

Destined for creative work

Hoogendijk's second dad, Roelof Frankot, was a trained photographer who made his name as a painter associated with the CoBrA movement, named after the avant-garde artists' home cities: Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam.

Her mother, Gine Hoogendijk, designed interiors for projects such as the Hilton Hotels in Holland.

"She was the tallest, most beautiful woman in Amsterdam after the war," her daughter says. "People would always look to see if she was



“Rainstick” by Micky Hoogendijk.



“Regal Blonde” demonstrates Micky Hoogendijk’s bifurcated techniques.

wearing high heels. She was actually wearing her brother’s shoes because there were no cute shoes after the war. She was very funny and stubborn in a good way. I was her No. 1 project in life.”

A product of a liberal upbringing, the younger Hoogendijk was an only child who performed at the drop of a hat.

“Everyone said I would become an actress,” she says. “I believed everything and was teased in school. I’d wear my mom’s beautiful undergowns to school because I was a princess. That didn’t go over well.”

Hoogendijk spoke Dutch, of course, growing up, but learned English quickly. When asked why she betrays no trace of a

Dutch accent, she explains that she sounds British in the U.K., American in the U.S. and so forth. She echoes back the sounds.

Hoogendijk didn’t like school much until she attended one with a theater. She was 20 when she finished at the Rudolf Steiner School, which provided an in-depth arts education.

Still strikingly beautiful today, she immediately fell in love with artist Scholte, and for the next seven years, she put aside an acting career to devote her life to his work.

One of his biggest projects was a giant mural in Japan. At Sasebo in the

Nagasaki Prefecture, the Japanese had built Huis Ten Bosch, a theme-park version of a Dutch city with full-size buildings.

“The palace of our queen is duplicated one-on-one, but with better gardens because the Japanese had money,” Hoogendijk says with a laugh. “The city is as big as Monaco, like Amsterdam without the hookers or the bikes.”

Tragedy struck the artist and his wife in 1994 when a bomb went off under their car in Amsterdam. Scholte lost both his legs. Hoogendijk miscarried for the second time. Though still loving, the shaken couple eventually parted ways.

On her own, Hoogendijk tried modeling, then was cast in a prime-time Dutch soap opera.

“I played a bitchy character,” she says. “Five days a week for two years.”

That made her famous. A desire to learn more about acting took her to Los Angeles, where she earned roles and critical praise in indie movies such as “Blindspot.”

Then, five years ago, into her life came the charismatic Curry, whose broadcasting career first took off in the Netherlands.

Layered images

“We call it the day that lighting struck – in a positive way,” Hoogendijk says of meeting Curry. “You see 3-D and hear angels. We’ve been together ever since.”

After living in San Francisco and Los Angeles – and taking a 6,000-mile tour in a recreational vehicle – the couple settled in Travis Heights. Sweetening the deal, Curry came with a 23-year-old daughter, which raises hopes for grandchildren.

Four months after she met Curry, Hoogendijk’s mother passed away.

“I think she felt Adam was the right one and she just let go,” Hoogendijk says. “She gave me a camera. I took pictures out on the street. Took pictures of architecture, lines, homeless people. I was able to walk around and be the voyeur. I had been so famous in Holland. This changed my life. Made me a better person.”

Once, as a thank-you gift for a host, she made a book of images. The art collector encouraged Hoogendijk to follow her photographic talents.

She began by photographing actors, “interesting people who don’t mind getting naked,” she says. “I discovered the portrait because I had this one lens. You see progress in my work when I get a new lens.”

She uses a Canon D5 before adding just one digital layer.

“Photography is my first medium,” she says. “Photoshop is my brush.”

Her starting point is an encounter, dream or object that culminates in an explosion of ideas.

“On set, I allow my model’s instinct and personality to melt together with my camera and drive my creative inspiration,” she says. “I coax trust, contact and vulnerability from my subjects in order to produce an image from which the viewer can then create his own world.”

Themes of religion, society and mythology recur. She met the subject of “My Ode to Damien” at an Austin mall.

“She was 15 with long, skinny legs, big ears, big eyes,” Hoogendijk says. “Still a kid not aware of her beauty. Not aware of all the things she will be going through as a woman. I saw in her a whole life of things still to happen. The things that enrich us, but also scar us.”

Hoogendijk imposed a diamond skull over the girl’s face in honor of a work by artist Damien Hirst: “Each stone stands for a life experience that she will have as a woman.”

In “Rainstick,” she employs model My-Cherie Haley as a muse.

“She takes me into a dream world,” Hoogendijk says. “My head is full of pictures. It starts with things I write down every morning when I wake up. Small ideas, little drawings. It’s very busy in my head.”

“Regal Blond” draws the viewer through a dense, bright mask directly to the eyes.

“Most of my portraits are done with natural light,” she says. “This allows the viewer to actually look into the eyes of my subject instead of seeing the hard flash lights reflecting.”

The images are charged with emotion.

“Each work is intensely personal and takes both me and my subject on a journey that provokes fundamental questions about life and our existence,” Hoogendijk says.

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