

# Cycle and renewal

Anne Pesce is a painter and has been riding a bicycle for ten years with consistency, intensity and determination. Her daily appointment with

the On how to be both a professional and an amateur. **Vence pass** (altitude 963 metres, average gradient 6.63%) gives her the vision required to feed her artistic ambitions, each time from a different perspective.

Setting out to meet Anne Pesce is already quite a journey in itself. As you leave Nice, you must take the road that travels up and down the inland until you reach Vence, and, a short distance from the town centre, you finally start “climbing” up to her apartment that neighbours the limestone mountains. Her workshop is exceptional: the panoramic view embraces on one side the open sea and, to the north, the mountain that answers back. “It’s a centre from which I measure my feelings towards and my distance from the world”, she explains.

Before settling down in this observation tower onto the world, Anne crisscrossed the vastness of the planet. To reach the French Southern and Antarctic Territories, she sailed on board the Marion-Dufresne, shared the life of sailors on the mothership of the bases of the Crozet and Kerguelen islands. She went on board the sailing boat Kotick travelling to Greenland, where she says she “experienced” sunrises and sunsets. She also immersed herself for several months in the urban New York landscape. At the time, in her mind, “experiencing the world meant figuring out the distance between myself and the relief”.

## Riding at dawn

Around ten years ago, she decided to climb on a bike to go to the market, found the experiment helped her embrace a new perspective, and, by chance, rode the path that led to the Vence pass. Rid the old bicycle, Anne soon purchased a bike worthy of a pro, a kind of ultra-light and ultra-designed machine which she chose gold coloured. The practice turned

into a ritual that takes place every day: each morning, at 7, rain or shine, the itinerary is the same, approximately 40 kilometres long. “I begin relatively slowly with a very strong gradient, followed by a very fast descent. The amplitude of speed is very interesting: it takes me one hour to climb a slope I ride down in 20 minutes.” Riding in a car alongside her, to the top of the pass, gives you a notion of the physical effort required to conquer the slope...

Taking off year-round at the same time, Anne experiences all seasons — like the painter Poussin and *The Seasons*. She knows all the hours of sunrise in an ever-changing landscape. Her outing on a bike is her way to enter her workshop: “Since I am mindful, I learn about the landscape, I absorb it physically, it becomes part of me.”

Cycling has also enabled her to attain a kind of weightlessness, a nod in the direction of her childhood dreams: “When I take off in the early morning, when it’s still dark, I feel like I’m in the Apollo capsule, with the harshness of the winter air, as I observe an impressive sunrise. I would have loved to be an astronaut!”

As she rides and dashes along the asphalt, her path, like her vision become clearer. She tells us that “as you travel the world, you must foremost take care to go down the appropriate path, to avoid falling along the way, but also to stick to the right line.” An obstinate line, like the road markings or the rubber of a tyre, like a stroke, the stroke she will later draw.

## Next step

Her drawings on her sketchbook become the pictorial embodiment, the sensitive retranscription of her two-and-a-half-hour outing. “When I paint or draw, I need to feel that my gesture echoes my journey through the landscape, everything I experienced”. A visual work that always conjures up the travels she has undertaken for nearly twenty years through the production, among other things, of 23 sketchbooks between 2000 and 2017. There are those she created while wandering alone in New York —riding a bike there turned out to be too dangerous— and other one-off creations.

“The 2016 agenda, on which I worked daily, is the only one that corresponds to my morning outings in Vence over the course of that year. None of the other itineraries share that obsession, that ritualization”, Anne adds.

We discover some of her work at the Galerie de la Marine in Nice, on the Promenade des Anglais, as she prepares her future exhibition. Large format paintings and drawings hang next to each other, while notebooks and her pictorial works lie on the floor. From the infinitely big to the infinitely small, the landscapes crossed in their condensed form are laid down in her notebooks.

The variety and the intensity of the techniques used are revealed on the pages: her collages of coloured adhesive tape, evocative of the line on the asphalt, its stripes or drips, its tears and foldings... Ballpoint, watercolour and felt tip take care of the primary colours. The artist envisages gold and silver, which are very present, as lightning, sparks of light or unbalance. You even come across patterns

Spirograph: “It turns and it’s mechanical, I love it! It creates movement and sometimes it slips! It produces a lot of energy.”

In the exhibition, you move between dimensions and the public is pushed to find its feet in the venue. “Everyone must find his or her balance”, she declares. This awareness, that dates back to her trip to Antarctica, still imbues her practice, which she explains as follows: on the tiny island of Amsterdam, inhabited by scientists year-round, a geologist froze in his steps after taking a few paces to discover the place. He told her: “I’m stopping since I’ve decided to take a full year to discover the island. Indeed, If I walk around it the first day, in 365 days, I will shoot myself.” Anne underlines: “what is important, is the way you choose to embrace the world”. She has chosen repetition of movement and of effort, to admire the site; a form of elevation, both spiritual and physical, that helps her drag herself up the Vence pass, where she penetrates the atmosphere in strides, where the landscape is gradually reconfigured as she progresses finding a new expression in her creations. And on the floor of the exhibition space, the blast of the bomb produced with the energy of the body, turns into the route that conveys her path as it unthreads and her place in space.

As she leaves the gallery, Anne concludes: “I am one with the world! The more I rub, the more I express it.” An airborne artist, a cyclist guided by art.