

ART AT SEA

Alain Despert's art sets sail from Bora Bora and arrives in Malta.

In real estate terms, location is the currency that determines the value of a property and the quality of life of its inhabitants.

The landmark teak and glass house perched on top of a hill in Bora Bora was rich in that currency. Like curious eyes, its windows peeked from behind a verdant curtain of coconut palms and banana, mango and papaya trees. And its views were of a blindingly blue lagoon, a barrier reef, and beyond, a flock of neighbouring islands floating on the great South Pacific like a shimmering dream.

And when the wind blew, the lagoon became an arena for the battling elements: thunderous waves, billowing dark clouds and sheets of rain drawing a violent veil on the horizon.

That was the view from artist Alain Despert's window during his 10-year stay in Bora Bora, the beautiful island in the French Polynesia.

Despert first arrived in Bora Bora in 1986 as resident manager of the Hotel Bora Bora. Then four years later, the magazine *Town and Country* discovered that Despert wasn't just the resident manager of the iconic hotel - he was also a self-taught artist intent on translating his life on the island into the most colourful, moving paintings.

The editor of *Town and Country* convinced Despert that he should move to New York and pursue his artist's dream.

In New York, Despert was soon moving in the right circles. Once in New York, he immediately attracted the attention of Absolut vodka, who included him in their worldwide campaign. As an Absolut artist, Despert is in the excellent company of other Absolut artists the calibre of Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, Louise Bourgeois, Damien Hirst and Hung Tung-Lu. Despert's image of the Absolut bottle floating in the Bora Bora lagoon spoke of the island he loved so much, but also of the wide open ocean and messages from lands beyond.

While in the US, Despert collaborated with the Best Buddies charity, run by Anthony Kennedy Shriver, nephew of the former US president John F Kennedy. Despert also exhibited extensively in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and other major cities.

Then in 2001, Despert decided to move back to Bora Bora with his wife, Karen. Here, he attracted art collectors from all over the world. Celebrities such as Robert Redford, Sarah Jessica Parker and Anderson Cooper all visited

“Celebrities such as Robert Redford, Sarah Jessica Parker and Anderson Cooper all visited his studio in Bora Bora.”

his studio in Bora Bora. His art gained a worldwide following - another endorsement comes courtesy of fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg, who was visiting on S/Y EOS how, “Alain Despert is the famous artist in Tahiti. His work is magnificent and sells around the world.”

While in Bora Bora, many yacht owners visited his studio to acquire paintings. Despert was commissioned to create specific paintings for several yachts. In 2010, one of Despert's collectors commissioned him to create the predominant artwork for his new yacht M/Y Pacific, a 280-footer designed by German Frers and launched by Lürssen.

For this project, Despert created a large-scale painting on canvas titled *19 Fish*. The painting was then reproduced in glass and backlit to create a dramatic impression in the main salon of the yacht. Other Despert paintings can also be seen throughout the yacht. ➔

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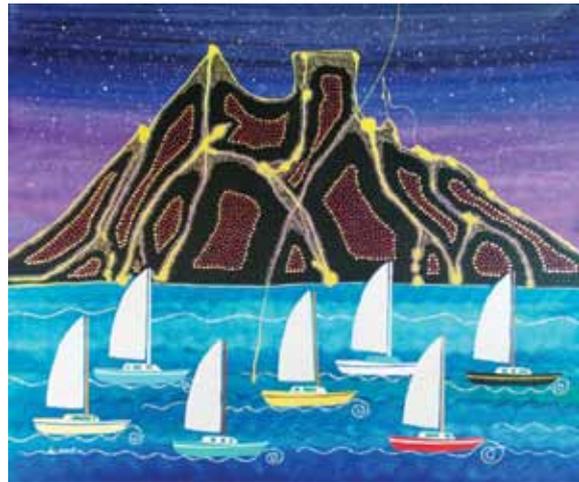
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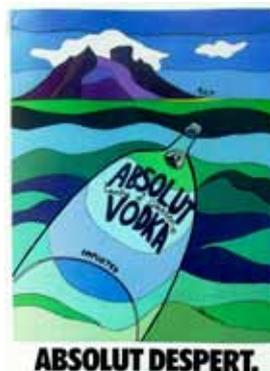
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ART



Last year, Despert decided to move to Europe and chose Malta as his new paradise island. Inspired by the old continent, the architecture and the sea, Despert set up studio in the capital, Valletta, from where he can view the magnificent baroque cityscape and, beyond, the sea, and paint. 



Alain Despert is currently preparing a major retrospective exhibition scheduled for January 2013, to be held at the Auberge d'Italie, Valletta.

Viewings at Alain Despert's studio on Strait Street, Valletta are by appointment only. For more information call on 2766 6675 / 9960 2655, e-mail despertmalta@gmail.com or visit www.despert.com