

# Broad canvas

FEMININITY IS A KEY COMPONENT IN THE UNIVERSE OF DANISH ARTIST EVREN TEKINOKTAY. CAMILLA ALFTHAN VISITS HER LINGERIE SHOP TO TAKE HER PULSE

**f**or 32-year-old Evren Tekinoktay, exhibitions are a way of life. Each time she begins to plan a new one, she filters through everyday situations from the past and present.

"I go backwards but also forwards to search for things that inspire me," says Tekinoktay, who typically flips through odd books and snapshots for something that will catch her eye. The image of a pair of curtains pulled together in front of a shuttered window made it into an exhibition in Maastricht, along with an open door jammed full of mattresses. To most people these images seem absurd, but in Tekinoktay's eyes they become pieces of art.

Now she's planning her first solo exhibition in London, and she's going through all the rituals of tidying up and rummaging about before she gets started.

## Strokes of Tekinoktay

**NAME** | Evren Tekinoktay

**BORN** | In Copenhagen, November 18, 1972, to Turkish parents

**FAMILY** | Her husband and fellow artist, Tal R, and their four-year-old son, Yunus

**TRAINING** | Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam (1993-1997); Jan van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht (1997-1999); Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen (1998-1999)

**MOMENT TO SAVOR** | Winning *Scanorama's* 2004 Culture Award, and beating the Danish Crown Prince and Crown Princess in the process. "That was pretty cool"

**BIGGEST REVELATION** | When she stepped into a lingerie shop and decided she had to have one

"As an artist you always doubt yourself. But it's the anxiety and the thrill of having to present something that keeps me going," she smiles.

As the daughter of one of Turkey's first news correspondents in Copenhagen – her father worked for the daily paper *Hürriyet* and the national TV channel TRT – Tekinoktay grew up in the same building as the notorious motorcycle gang Bullshit. "They were very nice and looked after me when I was skipping rope down on the street," she says.

Tekinoktay collected scraps and paper dolls, played handball and basketball and

Turkish singer Bülent Ersoy, whose feminine looks gave him the nickname "Sister" before he underwent a sex change.

With the opening of her shop, Tekinoktay Finest Lingerie, two years ago in Copenhagen, her feminine esthetics found another outlet. The boutique is an exclusive, boudoir-like universe of old-fashioned perfume bottles and vintage jewelry. The lingerie is displayed on handmade hangers, some of which carry Tekinoktay's own label, Polish&E.

"I wanted to create something accessible to most people, which would have more of an impact than an exhibition. But

**"The shop isn't art. It merely exists because it sells"**

spent all her pocket money on *E.T.* puppets and movie tickets as she was convinced that she had a connection with Spielberg's extraterrestrial figure.

"I saw the film eight times. We had the same initials."

She also used to draw a lot, but it was not until she traveled to Amsterdam as a college student that she realized she wanted to study art. The year after, at the age of 20, she entered the Gerrit Rietveld Academy. Later, when applying to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, she met her future husband and fellow artist, Tal R (a.k.a. Tal Rosenzweig), on a bus. Today both artists exhibit in some of the most renowned galleries in the world.

Tekinoktay focuses on collages and occasional light installations. Her most frequent motifs are women. Old snapshots of her mother are present in her work along with ads from the 1970s and 1980s and the

even if the shop is an image of my vision, it's not an art project. It merely exists because it sells," she says, realizing that her art – after the years of struggle "all artists go through" – now also helps pay the bills.

Attention soared when the British advertising guru and art collector Charles Saatchi last summer bought three of her works at her debut show in London. In October, Tekinoktay will take part in Saatchi's 20th-jubilee exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery in London, which could be her biggest break yet.

While such events may occasionally boost her artistic ego, her homelife ensures her feet stay firmly on the ground.

"Tal has a daughter from a former relationship who doesn't think he can draw. She thinks his paintings are daubs. It hasn't got to that point with our son, he just knows that mom makes pictures and so does he." ©



