

Unadorned Book Blog Interview

By Cheryl Pitt

UB: Please, tell us a little about yourself.

VS: I am born in France in a very conservative family (very waspy) in Normandy.

I studied Art and lived in Paris before I moved to New York 10 years ago.

I came alone and found New York sweat and bitter at the same time.

I had the chance to participate in an Art/Exchange program between the University of Paris 8 and Hunter College New York (Art).

When 9/11 happened I was in Paris but when I came back on September 19. I felt so hurt that we attacked Manhattan that I wanted to share my city fascination with others by starting to write the book "Only in New York, Darling!"

UB: Thank you for your support. It was a sad, tragic day for America and we greatly appreciated the outpouring of love, and still do! Your book, "ONLY IN NEW YORK, DARLING!", is about a French girl who comes to New York and tries to make it as an artist. Is this autobiographical?

VS: The three first chapters are autobiographical. It is my departure from Paris going to New York. At the beginning I hold the hand of the reader but after that I leave him alone in New York. and he will take some slaps in the face as I took them.

There are some interviews of many different kinds of people that I met in New York. Also, some chapters about the laundry, parties, art openings and racism in the city...and many more...

It is New York through the eyes of a creative French immigrant point of view.

UB: Why did you feel this story should be told?

VS: I came in New York with a lot of prejudices, principles and assurances from my

country, thinking that I knew everything better than anyone else. This is how we have been educated in France. Being in New York just destroyed many of prejudices because you meet so many different people in the city that it breaks them.

So I wanted to share this "breaking -experience" with French people who perhaps would never go to New York and never get the chance to experience that.

For the Americans, it could be interesting to have a new look at the city, kind of a new perspective...a fresh one.... from another pair of eyes.

UB: I am in love with France. Ever since my 2005 2 week vacation to St. Thibery I've been planning on retiring to France. What do you love about your birth country?

VS: My birth country gave me the taste of reading books and enjoying conversation about politics, philosophy, sociology... also discipline about food and not wasting anything.

Unfortunately, it gave me also culpability, low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Fortunately, America corrected those after 10 years!

UB: What do you love about America? And what was your biggest culture shock?

VS: Manhattan is in the extreme for everything. It can be super great and later a real nightmare. This was very surprising for me compared to the consistency of Paris.

Also, I was shocked at how nice and helpful the New Yorkers were compared to the French people. Right away, I felt at ease in the city, like home, and very safe.

Also, the feeling of openness and opportunities in everything: meeting many different kinds of people, having many different jobs, being supported and encouraged by people that you just met. What I really love about America is this amazing positive energy and open mind, which blows me away..... every day....

UB: Aside from writing, do you have any other hobbies?

VS: I do not consider writing a "Hobby", but an extension of my creative work. I do installations, collages, mixed media, photography and writing. I am a multi disciplinary creative person.

This book is like an "Artist Book" where you have my sculptures in words and all the subjects that I touch upon in my aesthetic work .

UB: What's next for you?

VS: To keep creating new pieces and make cracks in the certitude of people and make them realize things they would never think before.

They are so much into the TV, Sex in the City, shopping, magazines, society of consumption, newspapers to really think by themselves. Artist can be there to help “delobotomize them”.

UB: Where can my readers go to learn more about you or purchase your book?

VS: If you type my first and last name(virginie sommet) on google you will find around 16 pages about my work and the book.

Also my website is virginiesommet.com where you can read my blog, buy the book, see my work and the press articles about it.

My book can be purchased on my website, on amazon.com and on lulu.com