

# JUNGLE

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**The Uncovered Edition** / Anja Konstantinova / Lianne La Havas /  
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Mariell  
Amélie:  
Lost and  
Found









## “Nature is my favourite location.”

Amélie spent hours exploring the natural landscape. Since then its rough waves, beautiful beaches and saw-toothed peaks have cast a heavy spell over both her art and life, as she confesses, ‘nature is my favourite location.’ Through meeting the London-based artist I hoped to uncover how her personal relationship with the island continues to influence a photographic practice rich in narrative, imagery and emotion.

The Nordic landscape is more than just her backdrop; for nearly a decade this island has acted as her open-air studio, where the very extremities of weather are felt throughout the year. As Amélie reminds me: ‘days are short in Andøya, especially during the winter months.’ During this time there is no sunlight, only two hours of blue dusk each day. Amélie optimises this window of opportunity by working swiftly on location, having envisaged every last detail from composition to costume.

I wondered how many attempts it typically takes to capture the final image; ‘Usually just one,’ she explains, demonstrating that a deep understanding of location and preparation before releasing the shutter is paramount. With the help of the winter’s ethereal blue haze, her surreal concepts are further brought to life through creative styling and dress; the feel and colour of which, all act in response to the subject’s surroundings. For Amélie, fashion is a way of continually reinventing the ‘self.’ As a child she would delve into a wardrobe full of authentic 1940s and 50s clothes at her family home, dressing up was a way of being ‘someone different every day.’ And as her dramatic shoots suggest, a love of dressing up has not deserted her.

Since moving to London, Amélie has extended her creative repertoire to include interior design photography, which she admits has made her more aware of the technical aspects of composition: ‘I came to London to learn more about technique. Before that, everything I knew about photography I’d taught myself.’ She acknowledges that the technical experience she has gained from working for interior design clients has had a lasting influence on her own creative practice.

As our conversation continues, Amélie opens up about how the cathartic practice of photography in her homeland has helped her deal with insecurities about her career: ‘A little while after I moved to London I struggled a lot with finding back my way back to the inspiration that initially sparked my interest in photography. I was scared of being judged, not being liked and not having a strong enough concept of my work.’ More recently, the challenges Amélie has faced as a fledgling artist in London have been channelled through her latest series of self-portraits; *Between Seasons* becomes a personal meditation on those connotations, tales and traditions attached to the colour blue.

**“I was playing with the feelings I had in a period in life where I struggled to find my way back to the path I had started.”**

The Note of Breaking Waves (2015) is part of this series and throws Amélie's deft use of colour into relief, both in an aesthetic and conceptual manner. An overriding feeling of serenity is echoed by the neutral tones that take over the majority of the frame. From bare flesh and floorboards, to soft bedding and clothing, Amélie appears to melt into her muted surroundings. Small hints of saturated colour from a blue feature wall act as a strong backdrop for the image's central figure. My eye naturally picks up similar blues in the painting hung above Amélie's body, giving the illusion that she is floating in the sea beside the sailing ships or has been washed upon the island's safe shores. Although this is an interior shot, the singular painting on the wall stands in for a window looking out on to the Nordic seas; I can't help but feel that Amélie is yet again making a connection between nature and man.

Throughout her work, Mariell Amélie places herself as the subject within vast landscapes or dollhouse interiors, inviting the viewer to ruminate

on the powerful sense of isolation in her work. In The Note of Breaking Waves, we observe Amélie lying peacefully on a bed in a small Bed and Breakfast room with her hair falling perfectly to the ground, leaving us to question how she came to be there and why her Rapunzel-like locks have been ceremonially cut. I discover that the shoot's distinctly fairy tale quality owes much to the artist's fascination with dream-reading, a hobby that has inspired the artist to traverse the line between fiction and reality. Discussing The Note of Breaking Waves, Amélie informs me; 'I was playing with the feelings I had in a period in life where I struggled to find my way back to the path I had started.' Therefore we could interpret the cutting of hair as symbolic of a loss of strength and a way of letting go of unwanted thoughts. The narrative in this image is not exclusive to Amélie's personal experiences however. Mariell Amélie hints that, 'as an artist, or any person for that matter, you will have ups and downs.' The duplicitous nature of the colour blue allows us to recount our own feelings in response to Amélie's work.



Image: The Note of Breaking Waves (2015)



















The small Bed and Breakfast location in Dverberg, built in 1913, has been sensitively restored to celebrate its original features. Temporarily taking up residence in homes across the island, Amélie's work becomes enmeshed with the history of the island itself and the many lives of those who have entered and vacated the rooms; we are left to brood over times old and new.

Whilst much of Amélie's photography speaks of a solitary nature she assures me that the creative process is 'not as lonely as it looks.' Nature is not the artist's only studio assistant, 'My dad often drives me to shoots,' she explains, 'He stands in my place in front of the camera to test out the lighting and focus before I jump in. Sometimes there are people who pass and stop and look at what I'm doing but I can't take the picture if someone is watching.' There is a sense of privacy and intimacy to Amélie's creative process that the artist only shares with her closest; her friends, her family and "her" island. It is this sense of peering into a deeply personal and contemplative moment, whilst as a viewer remaining distanced and perhaps voyeuristic that is most captivating. Like the colour of deep blue, one cannot help but get lost in Amélie's worlds. ◆

**Uncovered:  
to make known;  
bring to light;  
disclose, reveal  
'uncover the  
truth'**

