

# The gift of inspiration

Dutch ceramicist **Fons Van Laar** shares how he has found inspiration from the sometimes unexpected plants growing in an allotment garden

**R**ecently I have spent countless blissful days in an allotment that belongs to my very dear friend Marita, on the outskirts of my native Amsterdam. Simply to be there – to spend my hours there, working away at nurturing the garden – provides a lively sense of inspiration for my life and work as an artist.

For its natural beauty, and for the beauty of the friendship that exists there, I am reminded of the simple joys of life. In this garden, there is a great variety of wild and domesticated plants. I love the rill and the fruit trees, but I love the flowers most of all.

Not long ago we met an unexpected dahlia in our flower bed, speckled with bright red spots like polka dots. This daring bud remained in bloom for an inexplicably long stretch of the season. It seemed miraculous. Those dahlias! With their bright colours and their strange, impossible symmetry... I cannot help but attempt to record the abundant forms that spring up all around me in the allotment.

The painted sketches that I make *en plein air* are expressive and instinctive. When I return to my studio, they are reborn either as paintings thick with impasto, or as large ceramic vessels decorated with robust coloured flowers in relief.

Each flower, each fruit: they take on their own character. I get to know them as I sculpt, and I grow fond of them. To fire my ceramics in the kiln can also deliver great surprises: new gifts from the fire, like serendipitous blessings. They evolve throughout my process, and I embrace those gifts eagerly.

I am grateful to be able to share this gift, and for the fact I am able to take inspiration from eclectic sounds and visions. I pretend I am a scarlet ibis, soaring over the river Ganges and looking down on crowds of bathers at the water's edge. I imagine processions of Mughal elephants with their golden garniture. I seek out the syncopated melody of Gambian guitar music.

I look again at the dahlias, so vivid in the sunlight. In my work I am the conductor of these distinctly beautiful images. My joyous task is to bring them together in harmony and to visualise their song. My goal is to lift my viewer's heart to a place of joy, and to do so is a pleasure. R

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You can see some of Fons Van Laar's ceramics at the Rebecca Hossack Gallery in London.

[www.rebeccahossack.com/artists/fons-van-laar/](http://www.rebeccahossack.com/artists/fons-van-laar/)

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