

Our family often took vacations on our tiny sailboat. The wooden 7.10m Waarschip was called Waratje.

With two older brothers and a little sister, there was not much for me to do during our sailing trips. My brothers sailed the boat with my father. When I was bored and sat on the floor of the cabin, I often stared at the depth gauge. Making sure we didn't get stuck on a sandbank. My father occasionally cut a course between the buoys.

We would always sail in Zeeland, Haringvliet, Hollands Diep, Veerse Meer. I still remember our outboard motor. 8 HP was stamped on it. I asked my father, "Dad, what does 8 HP mean? To which he replied, "8 Horsepower. As strong as eight horses." And in my imagination I saw eight harnessed jetblack horses pulling our little boat forward, and I thought, "8 horsepower, more than enough."

One day my parents had set course for Breskens. For that we had to cross the Western Scheldt. We had never been there before. A busy shipping route runs right through the Western Scheldt, which connects openly to the North Sea.

We sailed up the Western Scheldt in Waratje: father, mother and 4 children. I remember the feel of the swell; I had never seen waves this high before. And the sails were lowered because sailing is forbidden in a shipping channel. We were lifted high on a wave, and I saw the propeller of our 8 HP outboard motor turning helplessly in the air and in the subsequent wave trough I saw the entire outboard motor disappear under water together with the stern. The engine stalled.

Now the six of us were adrift in perhaps the busiest shipping channel in Europe. The sails had to be raised again, and my father kept pulling the starter cord on our soaking-wet outboard. And then it happened, the shouted commands on board faded

Because here they came

one by one,

like a scene from Jurassic Park.

The absurdly large container ships passed right by us.

Slow and unapproachable.

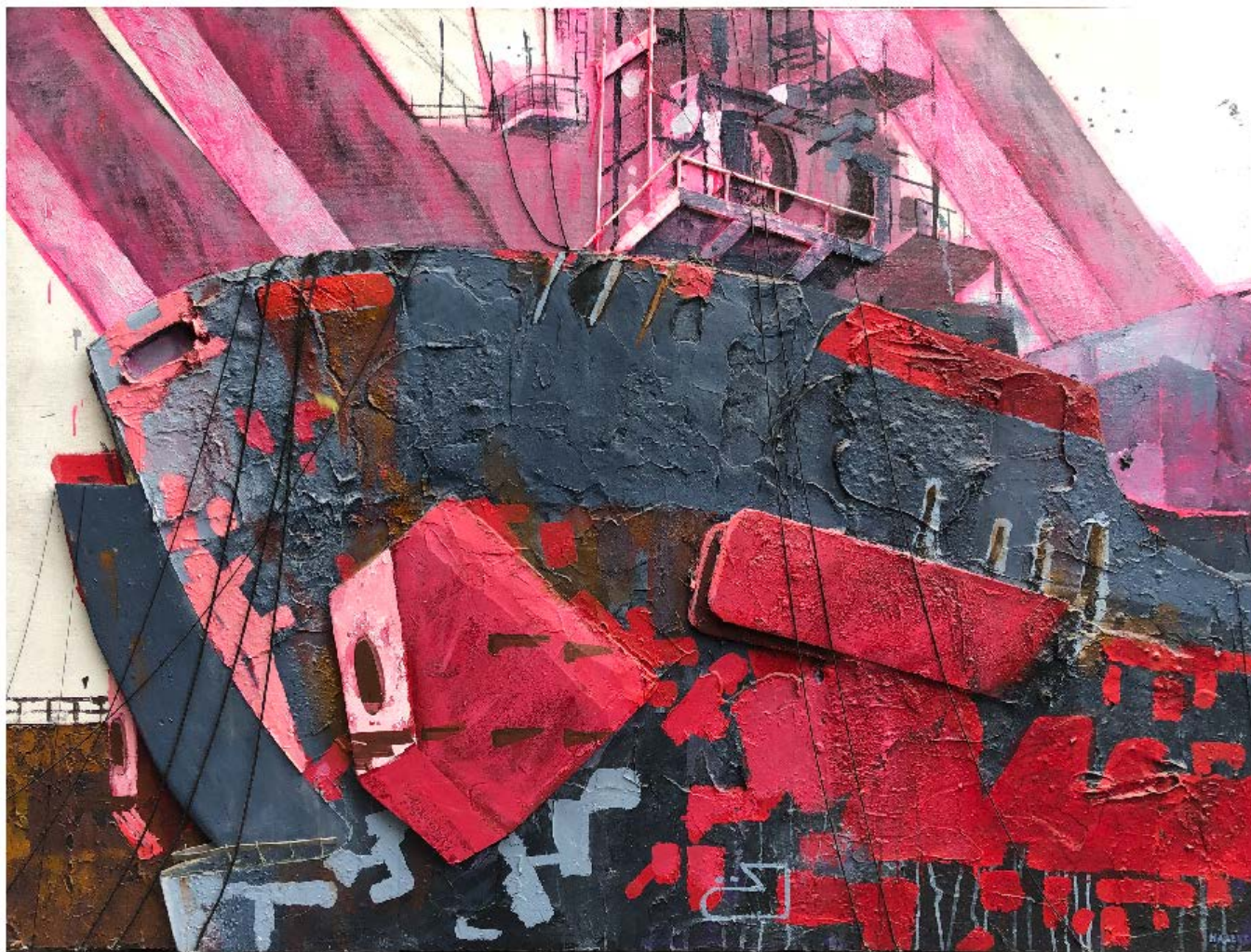
So close,

I was enchanted.

For good.



Craneship. (© Sasja Hagens, 2013. Seize: 170 x 230 cm. Technic: Acrylic paint, emulsion rope, styrofoam on canvas).



Audacia. (© Sasja Hagens, 2006. Seize: 150 x 200 cm. Technic: Acrylic paint emulsion, rope styrofoam on canvas).

People sometimes ask me why I've spent so much time painting ports, such an obvious theme. But their size and industrial quality light the fire in me



Unbounded. (© SasjaHagens, 2014. Seize: 140 x 340 cm. Technic: Acrylic paint and emulsion on canvas).

Artists can still be innovative within classical themes like ports and portraits, so as far as I'm concerned there's plenty of space for me



Tugs in action #3. (© Sasja Hagens, 2020. Private collection. Seize: 80 x 100 cm. Technic: Acrylic paint, emulsion on canvas).

To me, it s all about colour, About rhythm, about seeing what it is, yet letting the abstract value of the painting dominate



Sasja Hagens drew inspiration from interpreting ports as a metaphor for vigour, desire, life. The artist for the triptych *'Bridge Over Troubled Water/The Intoxication Of Victory'*. (Photo:: Lisa Diederik).
