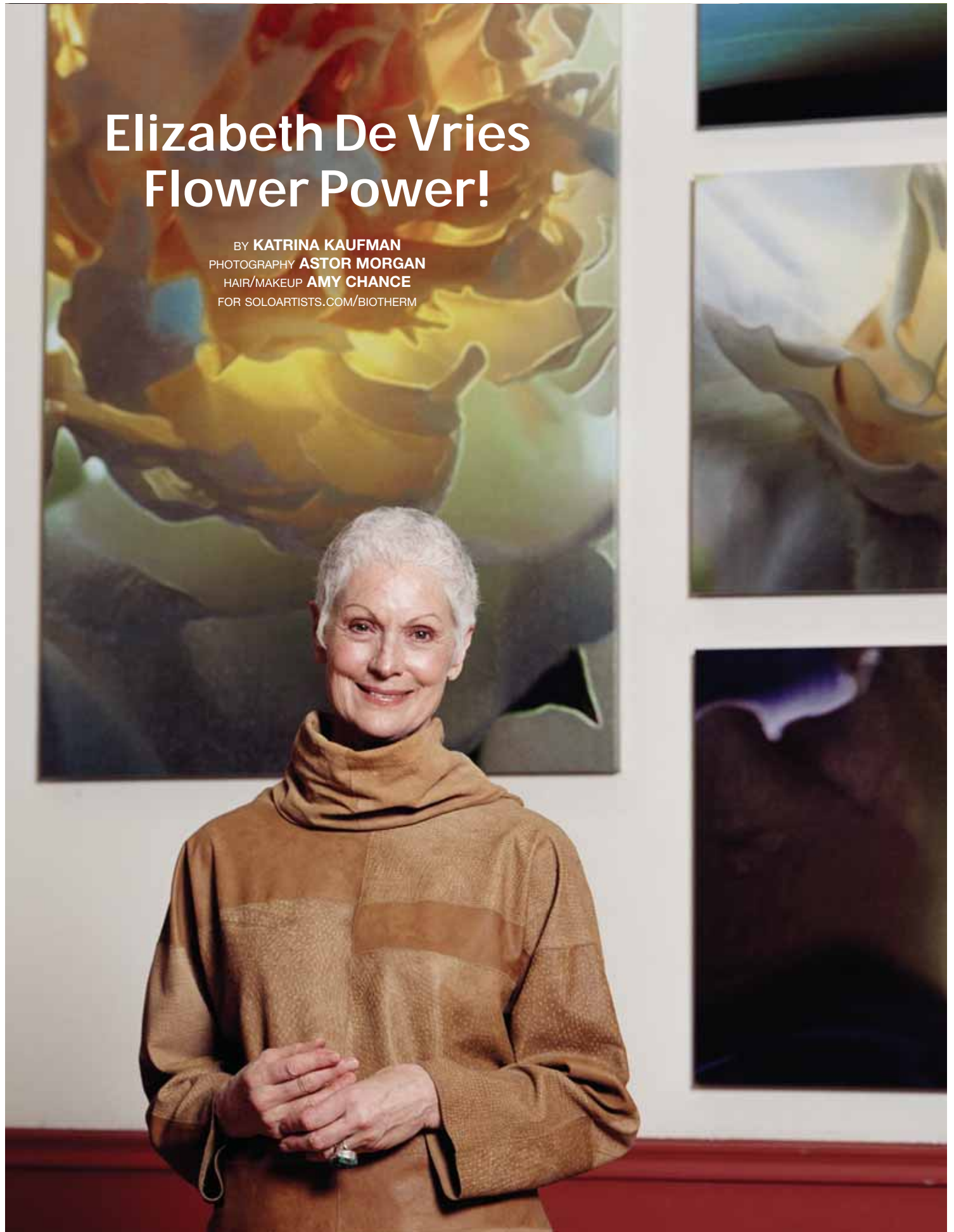


# Elizabeth De Vries Flower Power!

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“ I didn’t realize until I started to do photography how differently I saw the world from other people,” remarks Elizabeth De Vries. “I would show [my photograph of] a flower to someone, and the response would be, ‘I’ve never seen that before in a flower.’ I think when you do photography, what you realize is that what you’re looking for and what you experience is unique unto you, and that has been the joy of it.”

With an artist’s eye and an intuitive soul, De Vries, who has spent her life working as a spiritual guide, healer, and horsewoman, recently turned to photography and mixed-media. Three years into her artistic endeavor, she already has a show. Her current work, an in-depth exploration of the essential beauty of flowers, is being exhibited at the NoHo Gallery L.A. in North Hollywood. Featured in the gallery’s exhibit, “Pop Art Revisited,” her photographs of flowers concentrate on light, color, and form, at times abstracting flowers until they are unrecognizable. Not your typical pop artist, De Vries admits, “I looked at that room and thought, ‘How am I going to be in a pop art exhibit? But when I set it up, it looked fabulous in there because it’s like a celebration of color and form; it’s passionate, colorful, and has an abstract quality.’”

While De Vries’ career as an artist is only just beginning, she has honed her eye in many ways over the years, from representing a collection of Michelangelo’s models to reading the stars to nurturing seemingly unruly horses into champions.

**Venice: Tell us about your works in “Pop Art Revisited.”**

**Elizabeth De Vries:** There are eight pieces in the show. When I first started to photograph flowers, they were close-ups of flowers but more representational; you could recognize the flower immediately. As I started to work with the flower, I would take 200 to 500 pictures of one flower. As I started to take this journey into a more abstract experience of the flower, they strangely enough emerged like the galaxies or looking at quasars—the old idea of ‘as above, so below.’ It became so internal that the light moving through the petals and the different colors really looked like pictures that you would see on the Hubble site. Light was flooding through different parts and bringing shadow and form that you didn’t even realize was there. You would know with some, like with a large peony that it is a peony, but then you would start to go into the experience of all that exists within that flower.

**When did you first become interested in photographing flowers?**

Well, I think I’ve developed my eye as an artist for many, many years in a myriad of ways, but actually working with the flowers, about three years.

**Is this your first artwork?**

It is. I have been told in my life that I have an incredibly developed eye because I used to use my eyes in many ways: for example, choosing horses, and they would turn into champions, or choosing clothes for people, just knowing what would suit people, having that sense of line and form.

**Do you have any training?**

I’m self-taught.

**Have any artists influenced your work?**

I’ve been influenced by many. I feel in a strange way that our entire life experience creates what a photographer sees. I used to love Gustave Moreau just for his use of color; obviously Georgia O’Keeffe—I find hers a little bit more geometrical, but I just adore her work; I was very inspired by Diego Rivera’s calla lilies; there were many 19th century symbolist artists that did flowers that I loved.

**You were an art history major, correct?**

I took art history as one of my majors, yes.

**Have you continued to study art over the years?**

Well, I was in the art world for a few years actually, in Europe representing a collection of Michelangelo’s models; this was about fifteen years ago. I’ve always been interested in art. My father took me to a Van Gogh exhibit when I was just a little girl, and I remember standing in front of the sunflowers absolutely in tears.

**How did you become involved with the Michelangelo collection?**

That was offered to me when I lived in Vancouver. I had never been in the art world, and I started at the top. Someone felt that I had a love of Michelangelo, and they felt that it was a collection that they wanted represented in a way that was not pushing it in a commercial way; they just wanted somebody to take it into Europe. I did not end up selling it; somebody else sold it years later because there were problems amongst the owners, but it was a very interesting experience, and I saw a lot of art while I was there.

**What were the Michelangelo sculptures exactly?**

They were terracotta models; they were the models that Michelangelo created—you know, he’d make this little clay model, hang it on a string, and as he chipped into the marble, he used that as a source for the proportion because you know once you chip into marble its gone, it’s not like clay, you can’t put it back. So they would make these little terracotta models first, hang them on a string, then they would go to the marble. There were eighteen models. It’s a priceless collection.

**What do you hope that your works convey to viewers?**

Well, I think one of the most gratifying parts of it has been that I’ve done many [photographs] and each one appeals to a different person. I like that because I feel that we respond to color from our spirits, that we have an essence in our being that has certain attractions to certain colors. It’s very interesting because I often work as a healer with people, and I see colors around people; when I’m healing them I experience color that they need; the interesting thing is they will choose a work that embodies those colors. Also, because I’m working so much with light, my real aspiration is that [people] will feel inspired, that they will feel better, that they will feel enlarged, that they will take a journey with it, like you would with any piece of art that is expanding your life in some way.

**So you feel there is an intimate link between your work as a healer and your art?**

Definitely. That’s a very good question.

**Could you elaborate on that relationship?**

When I first started working with the flowers, as I said, I was just taking representational photos while I



*Soft Meditation*

was also concurrently being a healer. As time went by, I started to realize that the flower had its own individual message, that it had its own essence, its own form of beauty, just as each nationality or person has their own intrinsic beauty. As I started to explore that, I realized it was very similar to the journey I take as a healer where someone comes in for help; as I put my hands on them and meld into that feeling of helping, I start to experience who they are at a really deep level, and it becomes a very emotional and sensitive connection that we share. The same thing happens with the flower.

**How did you study to become a spiritual counselor?**

I worked a lot with the dying in a hospice for many years. I worked a lot with animals my entire life, like animals that had been abused. I taught children that had been abused how to ride horses that had also been abused. I developed a great sensitivity to what needed to be done, moving into a place of empathy and understanding, and as that unfolded, I realized that—especially in the hospice when this one man was dying and I prayed so much to help him that I could feel a flood of heat going through my body, and he shook his head and said, ‘It’s my time to go,’ but he gave me that understanding of what that is. So from there I went to study the Tibetan practice of Reiki, which is a form of energy healing; and I studied Orso, which is color, and I studied flower essences, which are the different vibrational essences from flowers. So I really studied vibrational medicine in every form.

**I read that you teach seminars on the “essence of beauty.”**

I noticed living in L.A. that a lot of women are very frightened of allowing themselves to age in a way that is in line with the natural flow of nature, of the progression of life. Even very young women were very nervous to tell me their age; they were petrified of letting themselves be who they were and had lost touch with themselves, so I put together a series of classes for women where we would come in and strip away the masks which we mistakenly feel we must don in order to walk in this world. Through helping women to get in touch with their essence, these women started to glow, an inner radiance started to come through them. It was the most extraordinary thing to see the transformation of these women as they gained confidence in who they really were; they became more beautiful, and their lives became more expansive. More love came into their lives and more self-acceptance.

**You have worked as a horse whisperer. What is that exactly?**

Well, first of all, if you think of whispering, it’s not using a loud voice; it’s gentle. I used to take horses off the track and turn them into well-known show horses. But that was not my reason; my reason was to rescue them from lives where they were just getting no attention and were being kept in a stall. So I would take them into nature; I would ride them into the wild in Canada to let them feel like horses again. I would work with them gently and slowly, and some of

them became extraordinary horses—I mean they were all extraordinary in their own way, but some of them became very famous.

**Are you still riding horses?**

I am. There’s a local horse. People offer me horses to ride. I love it. It’s part of my soul.

**Do you plan to continue your work as both a healer and an artist?**

Always. I also do intuitive readings; they’re all linked.

**Who comes to you for readings and healings?**

Everybody, from people with well-known names to someone who has no money. When I started to work as a healer, I made a promise that I would never turn anyone away for lack of money. For my readings, I have a price. But for my healing work, it’s really contingent on doing it because that’s what I’m here to do. And it’s a gift to me, too. It’s not like I’m a perfect person doing this; every time I give a healing, I receive a healing. We’re always doing something together in this life, no matter what we’re doing. Even you and I talking right now, we’re doing this together. That’s life, and that’s the journey of the healer, the photographer; there’s always a relationship formed. ▼

*“Pop Art Revisited” runs through May 27 at the NoHo Gallery LA, 5108 Lankershim Blvd, North Hollywood. See [www.elizarts.com](http://www.elizarts.com) or [www.nohogalleryla.com](http://www.nohogalleryla.com) for more information.*