

December 4th 1999
Vancouver BC - Canada
The Vancouver Sun
New Homes



**Fishing for furniture designs.
A Montreal artist finds inspiration in the deep.**

By Annabelle King

Charlotte Nicolin comes very close to living in a fishbowl and she doesn't mind at all. When passers-by stop and gawk through the tall windows of her Old Montreal gallery to see her deep sea collection of furniture that appears to be custom-made for King Neptune, she doesn't even pull down a blind. In stead, she has the urge to wave them on inside.

"One of the great satisfactions is watching people's reaction to what I've done. There's always a laugh, which means I have touched them." says the Swedish-born painter who recently moved to Montreal from France with her husband. They opened their gallery in June.

Who couldn't help but smile at chairs and tables that would be perfectly at home on an ocean bed waiting to serve up dinner for mermaids?

The larger than-life-size fish, crabs and lobsters are the artist's canvases, which she illustrates as skillfully as her paintings. And no two pieces in the collection are alike.

For the past 20 years, Nicolin's works of art have been inspired by nature, her forte being brilliant tropical colours that she has transferred to these functional forms.

Fish are her obsession and to get a better understanding of their movements and to see them in their own habitat, she has gone deep-sea diving in Israel and the Caribbean.

"When you are down there, you become a fish yourself, you're weightless and it's like being one with nature," she said.

Fishing is also a pastime for Nicolin. She feels that even the process of preparing her catch for eating gives her an awareness of the fish's body. "As you are cleaning them, you learn a lot about their anatomy and scales." she said.

The designs produced aren't of one type of fish but images stored in her mind. She reworks them into interesting combinations when she picks up a paint brush and starts her creative process. Constantly preoccupied with fish, she doodles their shapes wherever she happens to be sitting and often wakes up in the morning with clear, colourful forms in her head she can hardly wait to capture.

It's been two years since she started her furniture collection, an idea she credits to her young daughter.

"She was at an age (18 months) when she was into everything. I wanted a table she couldn't reach, and while I was making it, I decided I would have fun with it and paint it as a fish," she said. The youngster loved it and so did Nicolin's husband, Sylvain Gublin a marketing consultant. He saw the potential in these fishy designs and encouraged her to come up with a complete collection.