

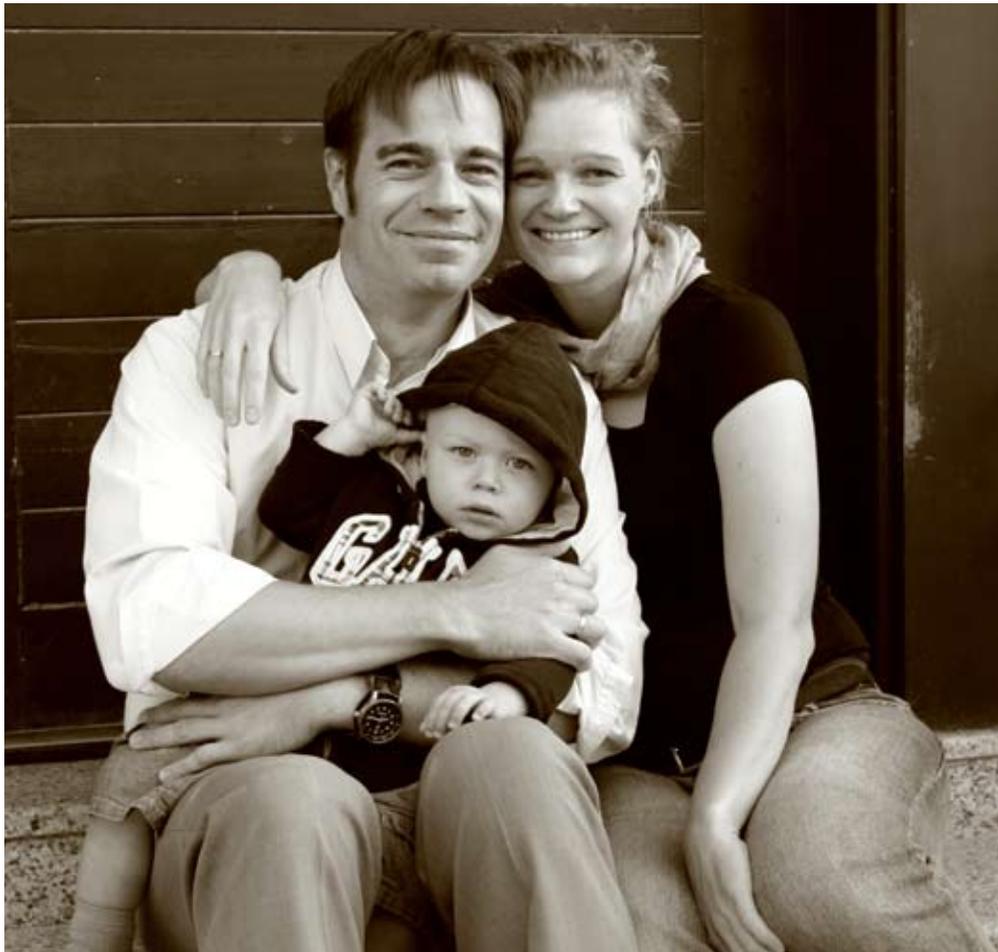
# ART OF THE MOMENT

From the photo diary of Stefanie de Vos

Capturing life in its many moments is what makes photography so incredible. As we gaze into photographs we revive the past and experience the reality of that same moment all over again. Without the photographs that track our footsteps we would never be able to see into the past and relive the emotions once felt.

In an exclusive interview with Photographer **Stefanie de Vos**, *Arabian Homes* explores that special feeling of revisiting the past in her cultural depictions of Bahrain.





**Left:** Stefanie de Vos (right) with her husband and son; **below:** ART lounge website designed by Stefanie de Vos; **opposite:** Night view of Diplomatic Area skyline.

**Arabian Homes:** Please tell us a little about yourself and when you began photography.

**Stefanie de Vos:** My story begins 1973 when I was born in Braunschweig, a lovely town in northern Germany. I grew up in a nearby village with my parents, my older sister, my younger brother, and a couple of cats, rabbits, birds and a cavy. I became an engineer in communication electronics, worked in a photo laboratory and eventually combined both trades in a school for web design. I love all kinds of creative work, though photography is my favorite subject.

I have lived in my village for more than 20 years and I guess nobody ever expected me to move to another country. But as soon I got married, my husband and I had the chance to move to the Middle East. And, ever since, I never regretted our decision. All these unforgettable impressions of different nationalities, cultures and traditions on this Island are amazing, and it has taught me more than any formal education could have ever done.

Today, our little family expanded by our 22 month old son Lennert, who was born here in Bahrain where I been living for four years now. During the day, I am a mother to our son; I organize a German playgroup and take care of our household. In my spare time I design web pages and take photographs of the different aspects of this fascinating island.

**AH:** What inspired you in the field of art?

**SdV:** Since my childhood, photographs were something special to me. Simply because they are telling stories, stories of the past, present, your own life, lives of others and stories of imagination. To each viewer, photos are telling a different story, inviting the viewer to smile and dream, as well as to deliberate.



I started taking pictures of everything as soon as I had my very first camera. My family, my friends, my home, special occasions, places.... everything! Time is passing by but photos always bring you back to the very same moment in your life! You suddenly remember even the small things. You

see your kids grow-up in fast motion and buildings and places changing by the second.

Especially when we moved away from family and friends, visual media, like photos and web design, became more important than ever. My work allows me to share with those far from me, my day-to-day life and give them an idea of how our life is in Bahrain.

When Lennert was born, I changed the content and look of our homepage. Currently the pages tell Lennert's life in words and pictures, how he is growing-up, and what he learns and experiences. This way I can give those far away a chance to watch him grow up.

**AH:** Since you became a part of ART lounge, how has that impacted your artistic experience in the Kingdom?

**SdV:** I have been following the concept of ART lounge very closely since its conception and taken photo coverage at every exhibition. It is impressing to see how many great artists this tiny island has to offer. And I must say that Marion Labani is doing a wonderful job, bringing all this artwork together, to give people the chance to get to know the work and the individual artist personally.

I have always been more involved in photography but I have been inspired by the different artworks at ART lounge. As a consequence, I painted my very first oil on canvas last year. But to

be honest, I like my photographs much more than my paintings.

**AH:** *How have you gone about designing the ART lounge website?*

**SdV:** First of all, the style, the design, the preferred colors etc. depend on the client. Then everybody has special likes and dislikes and it is the web designer's job to listen attentively. Then of course you have your customers of the client that you have to think about, people who the website will communicate to. It is very important that people are intrigued from the very moment of opening the site. From my experience, easy navigation through all subpages is what keeps people on your site. At the end it is a combination of all factors that makes a homepage work.

Marion Labani knew from the beginning what the ART lounge website had to look like and that certainly made my life easier; I just had to follow

her instructions. Of course, we met at regular intervals to discuss new ideas, status of the project etc. All-in-all, the whole project was a very relaxed and agreeable one.

**AH:** *Please tell us about the exciting exhibition coming up in April.*

**SdV:** It will be my very first exhibition with my photographs; very exciting and pulsating for me. To see my work displayed together with the ones of other local artists is certainly an honor for me. As a photographer, I am used to being behind the camera, not to be in front of my pictures but it is a great opportunity and I do hope that people will be attracted to the captured moments as I am.

The exhibition will take place April 15th – 25th at the Art Hall of the National Museum as part of the Spring of Culture. Four locally residing German and seven Bahraini artists will participate and show how their different cultures and heritage

influence one another. The project is organized in association with the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Bahrain Art Society, the Economic Development Board, and the German Embassy by German participant Mario Labani. The exhibition is titled "bilAteRAl relAtions".

**AH:** *What kind of photographic subjects do you enjoy capturing and why?*

**SdV:** I love different styles of pictures but especially "living pictures", on which the viewer can imagine that there is something alive; for example, a skyline of Bahrain by night. Without seeing actual people and only buildings, you can imagine that a lot of things happen at that moment. There are lights in the windows, lights from moving cars and waves on the water.

I also like "impression pictures", where you can feel how the captured people are feeling at that moment by looking at their expressions; for





**Left:** Cool down at sunset – Al Jazair beach;  
**opposite:** Untouched - Busaiteen.



example, a wedding, the moment where the bride and the groom become one. These excited, happy, joyful faces are priceless and radiate their joy to everyone around them.

Then there are the "pictures in the change of time", where you can see objects, like buildings, but also places changing. These pictures especially work for me when you change from black and white to color.

Obviously, my son Lennert is my very favorite subject. To keep his life in pictures is such a wonderful job and it gives me pleasure with every single shoot.

**AH:** *What do you love most about your photography in Bahrain?*

**SdV:** It is the combination of traditional and modern aspects. The extraordinary interaction of colors by the sun, sand, palm trees, and the sea, as well as

the colorfully lit buildings at night makes my heart as a photographer beat faster than ever. Bahrain just polarizes the viewer over and over again.

**AH:** *Do you use mostly digital and does the computer play an important role in your work?*

**SdV:** For a couple of years now, I have been using only digital cameras. I still have my old analogue cameras but digital makes my life so much easier. Without thinking of any wasted material, you can just take as many pictures as you want of one single subject.

In general, the computer is just a supporting factor for my photographs. I try to keep the pictures as they are taken, just adding some brightness and contrast or changing them from color into black and white. I usually do not mix two photographs into one with a computer. I reserve this creative part only for special occasions.

**AH:** *Do you have plans to further develop your artistic skills, perhaps try new techniques, subjects, etc?*

**SdV:** I have no fixed plans yet but you never know what will happen next. Learning by seeing and doing is my philosophy and with every new step, I am growing in my work. Photography will always be the important role in my life. And you never know, maybe in 10 years time the computer will play a bigger role in my work and my photographs. Let us just see how the technology and I evolve over time.

**AH:** *What kind of postcards do you plan to create with Marion Labani, organizer of ART lounge?*

**SdV:** Bahrain has so many beautiful places, traditional and new buildings, monuments and of course the exciting desert. People love to take those holiday impressions back home and send



**Above:** Tree of life;  
**right:** Khamis Mosque.

postcards to family and friends around the world. Postcards are a wonderful way to represent Bahrain. And, it just might make people curious to get to know this wonderful island and to come along for a visit.

The postcards will be offered by ART lounge to hotels, travel agencies, bookshops, and also to travelers who are here every week with their cruise liners. The postcards will be ready from May onwards and can be ordered via ART lounge.

**AH:** *What is your most inspirational message relating to art?*

**SdV:** Photography is of course something you can learn from a textbook but at the same time it is something that needs to be grown from the inside. You just need to open your eyes and observe the world around through a lens; to catch the perfect moment for the perfect picture. This moment will never return. If you are lucky, similar ones will but it will never be the exactly the same. Especially with this digital period you have the chance to try

and try without high costs, keep pictures or erase them and learn from each of your single steps until you get the picture you always wanted. Learning by doing is the thing to remember. **AH**

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*Steffi de Vos will be exhibiting with ART lounge in a group show at the end of the year.*

*ART lounge- promoting artists in Bahrain:*

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*“Photography is the art of telling the viewer with one single picture an unforgettable story.”*

*- Stefanie de Vos*