

A Field Day in a Dutch Farm...



A couple of years ago, at one of the fairs where we sell, I was walking around when I noticed a booth of European antiques. I was greeted by a beautiful, pleasant, and very tall woman named Marina. I complimented her merchandise and shared with her that we also sold European brocante and we chatted a bit. I invited her to visit our booth later if she had a chance. She came by later, was very effusive in her appreciation of our merchandise and we chatted some more. It was great to discover that both our merchandise and our personalities complemented each other.

I continued to see Marina and her sisters at this particular event and then last May, we ran into each other while we were both selling at Chateau Sonoma's annual "French Flea Market." There we discovered that we have a friend in common in Belgium and that she had in fact visited our warehouse which we share with our friend Steve, whom she knows. Well, when I told her we'd be in Europe this summer, and that it would include a trip through parts of Holland, she suggested we go by her uncle's farm which is also a brocante. Then we ran into Marina at the fair in Marolles in France and she again reminded us to stop by her uncle's farm on the way back from Amsterdam. We decided to follow her advice and took a little detour along the road on our way to Oosterhout.



On the way to the farm, there is a canal that is beautifully covered with water lilies that conjures up images of Monet's garden. We decided to stop and take a few photos. "I could get used to living here!" I exclaimed. It is breath-taking, and the air smells so clean and fresh. Everywhere you look there are pastures with beautiful cows grazing, and fields of corn, potatoes, wheat, and other crops. There were people riding bicycles and just taking a walk along the bank of the canal. It seemed so idyllic!

Not too far from where we stopped to admire the water lilies, our navigator told us to turn right and we saw a simple hand painted sign that said "brocante." We turned and discovered this rustic and beautiful farm in the most bucolic setting. Everywhere you turned and photographed could become a postcard. The colors were vibrant and the smell of the soil after the fresh rain was delicious.





Arriving at the farm, we were greeted by Marina's aunt and step sister. They were both very pleasant and welcoming and as soon as I mentioned we were sent by Marina, her aunt mentioned our names. "Marina told me you might be coming!" The other three members of that welcoming committee, were three beautiful black dogs named Negrita, Segundo and Bianca.



The place was beautiful and it included some buildings with traditional Dutch roofs and an array of greenhouses and out buildings that were filled with goodies of all sorts. The garden reminded me a bit of ours in Corralitos in that it sort of grows wild. There were climbing roses and red poppies, and all sorts of flowers blooming. There were also all sorts of plants in containers, including an assortment of succulents which I love.

The containers themselves looked beautiful with moss and different hues of patinas.



As soon as we greeted our hosts, we all scattered about the place hunting for treasures. Melissa and Bob went one way and Johan, Martin and I in

our own quest. Now and then, one of us would peek out of an attic or come out of a doorway bearing goodies in our arms. We each made our own pile and didn't bother to ask for prices until we were ready to pack it up. Along the way, we would stop and take some photos and enjoyed a hot cup of coffee prepared by our hosts and later sipped some cold beer as the day grew warmer.



It was a field day in many ways and we all left happy with our purchases and glad that we met some nice folks. They gave us a traditional farewell with three kisses and invited us to come again. "Next time, you come and stay. We can make some food, drink beer and you guys can spend the night." Now, that's Dutch hospitality. Who said the Dutch were stingy?