

At Home in India in Brandenburg
by Marija Grujić

A magical-realist interview with Eva & Hanna — where
a house called “India” turns into a compass. Horizons and
sweet-wrapper foils, grief and play, loud and quiet sides:
art letting distance feel like home.

AT HOME IN INDIA IN BRANDENBURG

INDIA

Eva: So, we left the house in the South, because there was the abandoned man. And it was hard for me—to leave him, to leave the garden, to leave everything. But then Hanna said: “Mama, forget the man, forget the garden, let’s make our own garden, let’s have our own house.”

Hanna: *(with the grave face of a small girl who’s always been wise)*
Sometimes you have to close the doors so the keys don’t cry.

Eva: I thought, this is madness, we weren’t even looking. And yet suddenly there it was, the house, standing there as if it had been waiting. My friend had the key – of course. Houses always have friends who keep their keys in their pockets.

The House: *(whispering, faintly pleased with itself)*
You can call me India. I waited a hundred years for two women brave enough to give me the wrong name so everything could be right.

Eva: From the start, it was our project – only, Hanna is the one who truly worked the house into being. She dragged out rubbish, sorted mysteries into boxes, hauled and heaved and argued with dust until rooms remembered themselves. She even conjured a kitchen out of almost nothing—pots balancing like acrobats, spoons settling in as if they’d signed a lease. I stood there thinking: that’s not improvisation, that’s witchcraft.

Hanna: Every house needs muscles before it can dream. Walls won’t whisper until you sweep their throats clean.

Eva: Meanwhile, I took the garden. A dry, stubborn patch looking at me with raised eyebrows. I began to *beackern* it – half scolding, half coaxing – the kind of work women do that turns a piece of ground into a room. She built the rooms inside; I negotiated with weeds outside. Together we made the place laugh again.

Hanna: Echt? Voilà. Ist doch irre, und wir haben es aber nicht geplant. Ja.

Eva: *(nearly spilling her coffee from laughing)*
Exactly! We didn’t plan any of it – and yet here we are, living inside the punchline of our own joke.

Hanna: People ask, “are you going to India?” I say: we’re already there. India is a house, a project, a key – and a cupboard that giggles every time we open it.

(They laugh again, and the plates rattle politely, as if to say: finally, someone is telling it properly.)

COMPASS

Interviewer: *(placing a tiny voice recorder on the table; it flutters once, then settles like a tame moth)*
Your work is full of horizons. Why?

Hanna: What was so striking on that ship – maybe not only the Pacific, but anywhere at sea – is that there was no light. In the Pacific it was always misty, so much water in the air that we hardly ever saw stars. Almost no clear nights at all. It was simply black. The night was absolutely black. That's in my text too.

Eva: It was really frightening. *Richtig, richtig gruselig*. You saw nothing. I went out on the balcony and looked into the water and thought immediately: *monsters will come out of this*. Just deep darkness. *Unten und oben*.

Hanna: Everywhere black. Totally mad. For twenty days, I took one photo of the horizon each day – the same, and never the same. But for me, the work became about something else. I had never thought about waves before. Yet when you look at them every single day, you begin to see differently. A wave isn't only two bodies colliding and breaking – it carries thousands of tiny movements within it. In the great forward surge, you can see countless little surges, all moving together. It's a pattern of repetitions, like a secret choir rehearsing. There is a word for it – *wave piloting* – old knowledge once read with skin and bone, maps almost lost.

Eva: And that is where the compass appears. Not north, south, east, west, but something else entirely: to stay still, to listen, to laugh. Hanna's gaze is my compass. Sometimes I think she's been steering me longer than I ever steered her.

Hanna: *(laughs, brushing salt from her sleeve)*
Mama, I've told you that forever. You just need the right horizon. Or the right kind of laughter.

The Sea: *(softly, through the recorder's red light)*
Compass, house, daughter, mother – all the same. As long as someone reads the waves.

Eva: It has always been like that. When Hanna was a baby, I nursed her during a thunderstorm. A thunderclap shook the whole house, so loud my body trembled. She was asleep, but she opened her eyes – calm, enormous, certain. As if to say: *Don't be afraid, Mama. I'm here*. And in that moment, I understood: it isn't only the mother who carries the child. The child carries the mother too. From the beginning, it has been mutual. Grief, too, is a kind of weather; funerals gather people the way shorelines gather driftwood. She has always had this determination.

Hanna: Every family has a map. Ours is drawn in waves. Some inherit jewellery; I inherited storms and patience. Mama gave me rhythm. I only adjusted the compass.

Eva: And she gave me the horizon—an eye that looks forward. Perhaps she was steering from the very start. Since we live just one floor apart now, proximity writes our forecast.

(When the room has thinned to steam and porcelain, Eva touches my sleeve and, almost in a whisper, says: dušo moja. The house seems to hold its breath. In that hush I hear my grandmother answer – srce moje. Three small words crossing the kitchen like a tide, a compass I fold into my pocket.)

SWEET-WRAPPERS

Eva: I used to call it just play, or kitsch, or *basteln*. But Hanna kept saying: *No, Mama, it's art. If I put the cup here and say it is art, then it is art.* And the house seemed to nod.

Hanna: Exactly. Art doesn't wait for permission. It waits for scissors, for glue, for glittering papers to hang themselves into sky.

Eva: I hung them on strings, hundreds of them. From the ceiling, like a mirror-sea. A curtain made of sugar-light. One side loud – rabbits, Santas, bright logos. The other quiet, only colour, only shine.

Hanna: When you stand beneath it, it rustles. As if each wrapper is whispering the name of the person who unwrapped it. A whole genealogy of sweet teeth. Our heritage in foil.

Eva: Louise Bourgeois had her giant spiders, and I have my praline constellation. If I saw it in a museum by someone else, I would say: *brilliant, breathtaking, I wish it were mine.* And then I laugh, because it is mine. It came from my kitchen – where work becomes weather and weather becomes art.

Hanna: Printed small on high-gloss paper, the horizons keep the same gleam as the foils, a conversation of surfaces. From your hands. From cupboards that rattle when you laugh.

Eva: Every time I hang the foils, I think of the sea again – the way horizons shimmer when light bends on water. It's the same trick. Only this time, instead of waves, I have chocolate and laughter.

The Wrapper: *(giggles)*
Once I was a tiny scrap of gift. Now I am an ocean. Isn't that sweet?"

(They laugh again, and this time the laughter sounds like hundreds of little foils fluttering in the wind – loud and soft together, a choir of sugar and light.)