

For Francois

Your first memory of painting...

I was 14 and at an art summer holiday camp. The art classes there were run by tutors from the Basel Art School. So the art teaching was very different and new in comparison to what I had experienced in school so far. The tasks I can recall were all abstract. I remember painting all day long on huge paper, over 1.5 square meter. One of the projects I remember clearly, was to fill a large paper with numerous rectangles in different shades of "one" colour. My favourite colour at the time was purple, so I painted a great number of small irregularly shaped rectangles, each with a different purple. I was fascinated by how I could find endless purples, just by mixing colours in different ratios. I loved the end result, a large painting.

How did you decide to become a painter?

It happened to me over time. I applied to art college when I was 16. And when I found out I was accepted onto the foundation course, I was in heaven. I knew then, I wanted to be a painter but it took me many years to be confident enough to say it out loud.

Did an artist particularly inspire you?

A friend of my father was an artist and we sometimes visited or met him when I was little. I remember being spellbound by his way of life. He seemed different and mysterious and I loved it. There are a group of maybe 20 artists I have returned to, again and again over the years. But the two artists I have probably looked at most, are Cy Twombly and Piero della Francesca.

Do you need to understand to love a painting?

I think, loving a painting, means understanding the painting.

Is there a work for which you said to yourself "This is exactly what I wanted to do"?

Sometimes it happens with my work. Though I can only see it in a painting many weeks after I finish the work. I call them my key-paintings. I keep them with me in the studio and I refer to these paintings as stepping stones to new work.

The famous work that you don't like ...

Many, but I also know it constantly changes. Work I didn't like before, I now like and vice versa. I very much respect all artists and their work.

What is essential for your creation?

To be calm, with a large chunk of free time and in my studio. Music always makes me calm.

What is your relationship to recognition?

Not so much recognition but sharing my work is an important part of my work. Be this in an exhibition, showing it to friends, through Instagram or any other form, where my work reaches other people. As long as I am able to show my work (sometimes) I am more content within my work.

If tomorrow you could no longer be a painter, what would you do?

Maybe I'd be a baker.

Your artistic dream ..

Just now, I dream of working larger than the size of my studio allows me to. And being able to make my own oil bars.

Gabriele Herzog