

*Schmölzer article: Horizon November 2017*

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## **Nicole Schmölzer: Abstract Artist**

**Swiss painter Nicole Schmölzer displays a unique dynamism in her artworks and has exhibited widely in the United States and in Switzerland for the last 20 years. She sat down with me recently in her sun-drenched studio in Pratteln to discuss her art and her passion for connecting with other people and their cultures.**

**My initial impression of your art is that it's bold, colorful and abstract. Has your main interest always been abstract painting?**

For me, abstract painting raises the interesting question of how much can really be expressed in abstraction. And how does this abstraction become a meaningful world of its own? And by what means does it do so? Abstract thinking is an important topic that ultimately deals with questions of one's personal life project, the values one pursues – ultimately, the imagination, and what underlies the foundations of a society in terms of abstract ideas, concepts, belief systems and values such as ethics, sustainability and creative thinking all put together.

**You studied art, art education and art history extensively in Paris, Basel, Geneva and Berlin. In parallel to studying, were you always able to find time for your own creativity?**

Painting has always accompanied my life, from my very early years on. My interest in and dedication to learning and transmitting visual thinking has allowed me to be in touch with the creative process in different forms, both in teaching and in my own work. I gave myself time to expand my mind and interests in order to grow with my painting while also diving into different fields: art history, romance languages, linguistics, cultural studies. All this curiosity has brought knowledge and know-how which has, in turn, formed the bridge to what has had the biggest impact on me overall: the opportunity to encounter individuals who are strongly dedicated to realizing their personal interests and desires in a particular setting.

**You spent a number of years in New York City and your work is featured in many prestigious public and private collections both in New York and here in Basel. How did you find New York as a Swiss expat?**

I visited NYC for the first time in 1993. It was a completely different world back then. I was, and still am, fascinated by the powerful presence of abstract painting in the USA, and particularly in NYC. There is a historical reason for how and why so many painters have settled there and developed their work there. In so many ways, it is, and has been, an intriguing place for the creative minds who have lived there and who have since migrated to new, open fields.

**You've also been in residency in California, New Mexico, Spain, Germany and Switzerland. How have these experiences influenced you?**

Travelling, spending creative and active time in different places of the world is of extreme importance to me because it allows me to perceive, observe and relate in a different way. In this sense, the artist residency grants I've had have been very inspiring for both, my work and myself. Not only have I met people with unique expressions, but they have also fostered new projects and collaborations.

**What should viewers know about the artwork you're exhibiting on Centrepoint's Artwall for the next few months?**

As a group, the works here relate to my paintings on linen which are my main, current focus, but they also relate to my works on paper, which are important counterparts. Both groups have specific conditions and expressions given the possibilities of the materials. Each group inspires the other and yet each path has informed my main body of work. The exhibited work deals with my search for transparency, for layering and for developing pictorial and visual spaces. It is a series that allows me to work on compositions freely, hence, it is ultimately a preparation for exploring other materials, such as working on site-specific-projects and on glass.

**How is painting like visual thinking?**

Getting to know a basic structure that requires an intense exploration of technique and material, grammar, structure and vocabulary, is a very helpful foundation. And from this basis, I love to explore new fields. Nonetheless, my tactile experience and my requirement for a visual impact are determined by my experience. From "painting," I can go into different fields, such as into site-specific architectural projects, where, in one recent case, watercolors created painterly atmospheres on three floors, or, in another recent project in collaboration with musicians, my flowing paints acted as my instrument on which to improvise. There is always so much more to explore.

**The artist herself will be at the Artwall's next vernissage on Friday, 24th November from 18:00 to 21:00. The Artwall events are free and open to the public so it can be a great opportunity to bring a new friend to Centrepoint and enjoy a glass of wine and snacks together with others curious to know more about the art and what the artist has to say. The exhibition will be on view at Centrepoint during normal opening hours through the end of January 2018.**