

### **Abstract Motives and Dissolving Contours**

You will not find small brushes for delicate strokes amongst the tools which Virginia Orbon Retzmann uses for her expressive paintings; she rather employs scrapers and very large brushes. She tells that, when she is in front of the easel, she cannot stop, she works for hours. Tonight is the opening of her exhibition "Realism and Abstraction" at the Friedrichsdorf town hall which is sponsored and arranged by the City's Department of Culture; She has been living in Friedrichsdorf for more than 18 years now.

The introduction will be made by her husband, Karl Heinz Retzmann. He says that Virginia is constantly painting, even if she does not stand in front of the easel, she paints when she goes shopping, when she is sitting in a café or restaurant, even when she is eating. She always observes, mainly people, she remembers what she sees, what she feels, what others do, how they behave, walk or sit, use their hands etc.

Virginia O. R. lives with her art. You can see her paintings all over the place in the large apartment where she also has her studio. She applies her colours aggressively and vigorously, thus creating symbolized themes, dissolving contours or frames, fragments in striking colour contrasts, occasionally also in more subtle tones, if appropriate. In her large format paintings one can often detect something realistic, the shade of a woman or an animal.

In the Town Hall she also shows modern expressionist portraits and female nudes in water colour, the female body and its movement being one of her favourite topics, as she loves to combine both, the result of which is stunning. Here, she applies a rather difficult technique as the allocation of water to the colour must be strictly controlled, which she expertly does.

The fact is that Virginia's style, her very own style, is completely unorthodox.. Not only does she paint on paper and canvas. She paints on long rolls of Chinese or Japanese paper, she uses jute bags and sacks, she mixes different materials to give the paintings a three-dimensional appearance. In one painting she even used the belt of her husband's old dressing gown.

In order to create something new, Virginia occasionally uses earlier paintings which she changes, sometimes cuts into pieces to use it or fragments thereof for a new painting or a collage which she then combines with water colour. She has plenty of ideas, maybe it is her background, as she originates from Iriga, an old Spanish settlement in the island of Luzon in the Philippines. Her husband thinks that this extraordinary feeling for colours and also for the light must have its origin in her homeland. The Philippine countryside presents some fifty different shades of green during spring and summer, he says.

Virginia O.R. studied chemistry in Manila and worked in catering in Hong Kong before she settled in Friedrichsdorf and started to paint in 1991. She is a member of the Friedrichsdorf Art Association, the Art Workshop in Bad Soden and of the Frankfurt Art Academy, whose medal of honour she was awarded in 1999.