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Paintings are looking for a title

Friedrichsdorf: Virginia Orbon Retzmann exhibits powerful paintings at the Town Hall

The four very expressive pictures in the glass box show different landscapes and cities from various countries, however, they have one thing in common: the artist used just four colours: magenta, cyanoblu, black and yellow. The title of the collection derives from Charles Dickens' novel "A Tale of two Cities" but the artist has changed this title slightly for her purpose and extended it to "four cities".

This little group is part of the exhibition "Painting of People and Places" which can now be viewed at the Friedrichsdorf Town Hall. Invited by the Council and the Department of Culture, Virginia Orbon Retzmann shows her powerful motifs and also has a message for the visitors: "Some of my paintings do not have a title, I would like you to find an appropriate title or description and write it down in my guestbook. If the titles seem suitable, I will apply them to the painting and publish them in my online gallery at Saatchi".

Referring to her landscapes she mentions that most of her inspiration derives from travelling. It is thus very convenient that one daughter lives in Catalonia near Barcelona and another one in Arizona near the canyons. Although she gets much inspiration from the sceneries in these areas, she says: "I can principally be inspired and motivated by anything I see. It is essential that I sketch and take photographs immediately, especially, if and when my gut feeling tells me to. I have to work quickly, in particular when I am working with water colours, I use large brushes, filigree ones are no use to my kind of painting". In addition to water colours and acrylic she quite often uses charcoal, ink and occasionally pastel and oil crayon as a supplement. The water colours must flow, they have to be dynamic. Therefore it is essential to use a lot of water. Often she directs and controls the flow of water by overlaying the canvas with paper, this way she can control and vary the dynamics and the intensity of the movement of the water which carries the colours. "But you also have to give the water and the colour gradient some leeway so that sometimes you get some random results which can be quite attractive". So, the interaction between colours such as black on yellow or crimson delivers a kind of energy and also creates entirely new perspectives.

“When I am painting, my husband or everyone else must leave me in peace. I immerse myself to such an extent that I withdraw for hours. Once I am fascinated by a topic, I try to implement it immediately, such as creating a series of smaller paintings such as the wintry and sparse hills and villages which I discovered in the South of the Pyrenees and shown in the exhibition”. Black, umbra, dark orange and some sepia are the colours which she used to create these very expressive and somewhat prescinded compositions.

The viewer notices the dynamics of an almost forceful colour application when looking at the paintings. Moreover, one also immediately detects the configuration of the colours with the corresponding contrasts as well as tinges and also her abstract conformations as well as the way she plays with apparitional figures. It is very important to her that now and then fragments of the figurative appear under the colour coat; although she likes things to be close to subtle, she still wants them to be noticed. The laxity and the spontaneity of the way she presents colours and forms are very attractive indeed and are evidence of high professionalism. One will constantly discover something unexpected in her creations: be it the contours of a woman, the shape of a building or an abstract landscape.

Virginia Orbon Retzmann was born in the Philippines and has been living with her family in Friedrichsdorf for 30 years. She started painting in 1991. She studied chemistry in Manila and later spent over 20 years working in Hotel management and Catering in Hong Kong.

When she started painting, she initially worked with water colours and painted landscapes only. Her first teacher was the well-known Frankfurt water colour painter Hille Koch with whom she worked until a few years ago. More than five years were spent at the Frankfurt Malakademie where she also started to become acquainted with acrylic colours. Virginia has been exhibiting regularly since 1994. She also has been involved in charity work: various projects were supported with the proceeds from the public auctioning of her paintings such as the implementation of an irrigation project in North Africa sponsored by World Vision or a compound for the bears in the Frankfurt Zoo. The exhibition can be visited until 25 March during the opening times of Friedrichsdorf Town Hall.

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