



*A Subject Self-Defined*

In a recent interview with ABSTRACT, German artist Yvonne Robert said “If you go to Pinterest or Google and enter “yellow circle, abstract painting” for example, the hits you get will be all seem very similar at first sight. And yet you linger over some of them in particular. Why is that? Perhaps because the proportions are better or you like a particular yellow more? You can’t always explain it. It’s a feeling. It’s right (for someone), it strikes a chord, it’s refined despite its simplicity.”<sup>1</sup>

The often bright and gestural paintings of Yvonne Robert result from an intuitive approach to color and composition. Her spontaneity of conception and dynamic gesture is void of complex references and their associated meanings. Instead she is steadfast in her commitment to universal concepts of form, mass, proportion, rhythm and structure, which constitute a common thread in her work. Above all, she is motivated by color, and her use of it is practiced and studied.

Art, other artists and her environment are all constant sources of inspiration. Robert grew up in a family of artists and found home-life aesthetically stimulating and informative. She remembers her parents often discussing the notions of color and form, and she was fascinated by the patterns and motifs of the 1950’s that filled her home. These early influences perhaps motivated Robert to pursue a career initially in graphic design and subsequently in fine art, the origins of which certain motifs in her current work could possibly be traced. Importantly, however, when Robert observes her environment, she perceives color first and foremost – a person’s hair in combination with the color of their skin and their scarf, an old bike that someone has painted in a creamy light grey with a new brown leather seat; sheep in the pastures, the lake, the sky, the mountains; how different the shades of blue are that interplay with each other in the sky, and how endless the combinations seem.

Robert also produces figurative paintings, portraits and still life, but other than the influence of her daily environment, she offers no critical meaning, and they are vastly abstracted. Simply put, Robert is concerned with self-reflecting experience and self-analysis. To interpret her work would be erroneous. Her work is a subject self-defined. It is not the thoughts and emotions of the artist that is important, but that of the viewer. Her work does not rely on socio-political rhetoric to lay claims to any form of philosophical discourse. She is concerned with color, form, and composition; and in that order. Her intention is to allow the viewer internal reflection; their unique perspective. After all, it is our individual perception that gives us clarity and a true sense of understanding. I might consider the sky blue, as do you, but do you and I agree on whether our ‘blue’ is one and the same? Her life experiences and feelings are processed and expressed via the execution of paint to canvas. She once told me that she “often finds flowers so incredibly beautiful that the experience is indescribable”, and thus, she conveys her exaltation in her painting. In all of her work, her intention is to bring the beauty and fascination of color and form to the canvas. Her work is somewhat reminiscent of the paintings of US artist Patricia Treib, whose geometric and abstract works have a similar strong decorative character. As with the work of Treib, Robert is not only interested in forms or objects themselves but the act of depiction itself. Her compositions are accumulations of pigment, forms and lines, which conjure a way of seeing, and how they relate to each other.

Robert works hard to create tension in her work with maximum reduction. The work “FKK”, 2019, draws both elements of abstraction and figuration together in one work, its composition a patchwork of rectilinear and circular forms that jostle with each other to conceal rather than revealing elements that lay underneath. The line-work offers shapes and forms like places of interest on a road-map that lead to new curiosities. Whilst we are arrested by what appears to be recognizable references, the interpretation of such becomes our own under brush and pencil. We are unable to define their place or purpose, we can only view such works in relation to our own.