



Some questions to UTA GÖHRING-ZUMPE

Born in Hamburg on 2nd February 1941, Uta Göhring-Zumpe grew up in Nieblum on the island of Föhr. After marrying in 1967, she moved to Berlin. Uta Göhring-Zumpe began painting in her early youth. In 1958, she met the Danish painter Morten Ravn-Martinsen, who became her first teacher and mentor. In Berlin, she began her studies in art at the HdK university of the arts (today named UdK), studying under Professor Merbitz. Her training there played a decisive role in helping her to form the foundations of her painting style. In 1974, she spent a number of months furthering her studies at the City & Guilds of London Art School under Professor Wilkinson. At Berlin's HdK university she met Professor Dr. Robert Kudielka, whose lectures on 'Aesthetics and Theory of the Arts' strongly influenced her intellectual approach toward painting. Uta Göhring-Zumpe spends most of her time in Berlin, an environment that she views as essential to the inspiration of her work. In addition to other exhibitions, she presents her paintings regularly at annual summer exhibitions held on the island of Föhr.

Ms. Göhring-Zumpe, how and when did you first discover your extraordinary talent in drawing and painting?

I never discovered any extraordinary talent in me. When I was five years old, I used to enjoy standing next to our village painter in Nieblum, admiring his work and telling him that I would one day too become a painter. Aside from my grammar school teacher H. von Gerhardt, nobody took my remarks seriously, let alone considered investing any confidence in my abilities. In truth, my achievements can only be attributed to something once expressed well by Claude Monet when giving advice to a young man: "*Paint and paint, and never be afraid of producing an unsuccessful painting*", what is talent when compared with diligence?

Though most of your work is done in your studio in Charlottenburg, Berlin, you live in a half-timbered house in Nauen, and have, among others, a yearly exhibition on the island of Föhr, which is where you grew up. Which of these places do you call your home?

The definition of home is indeed a difficult one. My feeling is that one's mother tongue is what truly comprises one's sense of home. I love the island of Föhr and the mentality of its residents. Though Nauen is very picturesque, its development, in comparison with other towns, has been somewhat neglected. Actually an endearing town, but I am afraid I need all of the contradictions, imperfections, friction and inspiration that big city life brings with it to accomplish my work.

Alongside your still lifes and landscapes, you have also produced a whole array of portraits, predominately depicting comely women and charming young ladies. How do your pictures come about, and why do you tend to portray women as rather graceful and elegant beings? Have you ever seen an ugly child? I believe that every human being, as long as they have not become hardened and listless, has a certain allure and radiates a beauty of their own. It may be discernible in their eyes; it may be the lines on their face that have been fashioned by experience; the line of a nose, their smile, or any number of things. One has only to be capable of seeing these qualities and remain willing to emphasize what is beautiful. The fact that I tend to paint more women than I do men is simply because I have found that, when sitting as a model, men often become rather impatient after a short time.

In an article that you recently wrote, you stated that portrait painters should maintain a certain 'political sagacity'. How is that to be understood?

The word 'political' is one that has been used to describe what is necessary on the part of the artist to enable sitters to drop their masks, the same masks that we all wear for protection. That requires a great deal of trust. It is not easy to bear the weight of a constant and critical stare over the course of hours. That can be extremely discomforting, and the painter needs to adopt a certain manner of familiarity while, at the same time, retaining a certain distance.

Painting is one of your passions, dancing is another. What types of dance do you do, and how often do you have the time?

Deciding to be a painter means deciding to work away from people. You set your own standards, and you are your own critic, hopefully without blind conceit or pretensions. When your working day is comprised of solitary pursuits such as these, being among others for a couple of hours comes as a welcome change of pace. I find dancing so stimulating that I simply hate the idea of missing a lesson. Dancing in a group, and, full of concentration, thinking of nothing but dancing, and simply being there, exercising with the others and experiencing the joy that comes from learning a new form of expression, all of these things provide me with another reason for keeping my studio in Berlin. I can easily take a short break, go for a practice session and then come back when I am finished and continue working where I left off.

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