

10. Zsofia Schweger



FRANZISKA TUNYASZ

Zsofia Schweger's minimalist representational paintings of domestic spaces break down the familiar into simple geometric shapes. By pre-mixing acrylic into alluring colours applied in a single flat layer, Zsofia draws the viewer into a narrative devoid of clutter and human interaction. Drawing influence from American modernist Charles Sheeler's precision technique, as well as the concept of place, space and time explored by contemporary artist Julie Mehretu, the works play on the idea of home.

The Hungarian-born artist admits that she no longer feels tied to her home country. Just track her education and it's not hard to see why: she gained a scholarship to a school in New York aged 16, finished high school in Budapest, returned to the US for her BA in Studio Art and Comparative Literature at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, and concluded with a two year MA at Slade School of Fine Art. Since then, Zsofia has won numerous prizes that have helped fund her practice, namely the Griffin Art Prize, which provided a six-month studio residency and a solo exhibition.

At first glance, emptiness resonates in the paintings, as the shapes illustrate an everyday setting without the associated noise. It's unsurprising, as the paintings are modelled on her childhood home which her family still own, but since relocating to the UK it stands frozen in time.

Under closer inspection, you'll find carefully placed objects that define a sense of belonging: soap dispensers, cushions, plants, clocks and sometimes an open doorway. "I quite like light switches and rarely edit them out of my compositions," shares Zsofia. "When you know a room well, you know where all the light switches are so you can navigate it easily. I like that."

Inevitably, working with this theme in a contemporary Hungarian context can bring a political take on emigration into focus. But this is a sideline to a more personal story, where Zsofia allows ideas of alienation and intimacy; absence and presence to sit side by side, and in doing so creates a new space to breathe.

www.zsofienschweger.com

ABOVE Zsofia Schweger in her studio

RIGHT Sandorfalva, Hungary #22, acrylic on canvas, 25x30cm



Best advice I've ever received as an artist:
"One of my Wellesley professors Bunny Harvey told me to 'stay calm and paint like a madwoman'. It's a simple line, but I think of it when I feel like I need to push through doubts or anxieties to focus and keep painting"