

# Strictly in blue

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Blue stands for discretion, gentleness, internalization – and more: You will hear about these things when you are engaged in a lively conversation with Stefan Muntwyler, who talks about his own life in relation to painting and artists. People visiting the Lady Chapel in the Catholic Church in Windisch will marvel at a monochrome painting with lapis lazuli pigments on a wood panel of 25 square metres as well as a monochrome fresco of 8 square metres which was designed as a background for the Madonna figure..

## No favourite colour

Blue: People entering the temporary studio in the Lady Chapel will see a colour that conveys the notions mentioned at the beginning of this article. People listening to Muntwyler talking about his frantic search for a «light blue of an enormous coldness, absolute depth and enormous clarity» will take a far greater interest in pigments such as manganese blue or ultramarine in the future. Stefan Muntwyler answers the question if blue was his favourite colour in the negative. The person he is talking to concludes from this that he loves many different colours. He does indeed, yet this love of colours needs further explanation. He first came into contact with the art of painting through his father, a teacher with a great love for painting. He admired the Old Masters and he passed his knowledge about them and their paintings on to his son. Initially, Muntwyler, who grew up in Wettingen, was interested in music; however, he soon became fascinated with teaching – and painting. At the art college in Zurich, he noticed that «basically, we learnt nothing about pigments, binders or paint brushes». It were these technical aspects, however, that caught Stefan Muntwyler's interest. He therefore read a lot of books, looked at paintings and broadened

his experience in the art of painting. In 1979, he travelled to Apulia and to a city that has since become his «second home»– Otranto.

## Otranto

Otranto Cathedral with its famous mosaic floor of over 60 metres (12th century) was the initial spark. «I drew it again and again», says Muntwyler and goes on to list further invaluable experiences linked to Otranto. He describes how he was overwhelmed with wonder, when he saw the lushness of a field of poppies or a colour pit with its «yellow, red, green, grey and black earth» – memories that have stayed with him all his life. He had been collecting stones and coloured earth for quite some time. It was not until that moment in Otranto, however, that he «became aware of the fact that minerals and lumps of earth provide the basis for painting». And yet, coloured stone and earth pigments had been used to make paint since primeval times up to 200 years ago. Muntwyler also mentions the «mercilessly blazing, almost violent light in Apulia» – another crucial experience.

## Pigments

In the course of years, Muntwyler collected mineral, organic, natural, and synthetic pigments and compiled a considerable register of colours. It is important to know, however, “that not every colour or idea of a colour can actually be blended.” What is initially felt to be a limitation is actually a liberation. Stefan Muntwyler turns the mineral pigments into paintings: Every colour is applied in its pure form und can be traced back to a particular stone or earth. Muntwyler worked in such a consistent manner that the visitors of the Lady Chapel in Windisch realise what the colour blue also stands for: the wonderful gift of concentration.

**Elisabeth Feller**