

Welcome to Painted Portrait, a new Interview series focusing on traditional artists worth keeping an eye on. Painted Portrait interviews aim to give the community more insight into talented traditional artists and how they came to be successful with their art. Today we are interviewing ~[SchweizerArts](#).

Thank you for allowing me to interview you, let's start off by having you introduce yourself.

-My name is Wolfgang Schweizer. Born 1966, grown up in southwest Germany, moved to the USA in 2007.

I am a painter (mostly acrylics and mixed media, epoxy), metalsmith (mostly copper, brass, silver, steel and natural gemstones) and composer (programs: Ableton Live and sometimes FL Studio)



What inspires your paintings?

As I paint mainly abstract, I develop most of the paintings according to my own subjective rules of proportion and color.

If something in a painting doesn't look right to me, I have to change it and go on and on until finally everything matches together in my eyes.

What are your favorite mediums to work with and why do you enjoy them?

-acrylics: in opposite to oil colors which I used in the past there is no turpentine odor. Even more important is the easy cleaning of brushes. This is most important for me, as I mostly use colors with a clean brush, so they don't get messed up by residues of leftover colors in the brush. I mix colors usually on the canvas.

-gel pens and ink pens

work good together with acrylics, especially on paper and wood, but also on not too rough canvas. They make precise outlines, and when I make epoxy paintings they are necessary for the details.

-digital painting: I mostly use GIMP and Artrage.

From all programs I tested (including the most expensive ones), Artrage simulates real painting the best in my opinion. It just takes a while until you find out which tool to use to get the result you want to have. For example you can use the "pencil - shader" tool for painting on layers and then mix the colors with the "knife-tiny frost" tool to get a glazing effect similar to thinned acrylic or oil colors.

-alcohol and water based inks. They make crazy marbling effects when mixed together. It just takes a while to produce the inks yourself.

- copper, silver. Easy to work, because they are soft. If it wasn't such expensive, I would use more fine silver instead of Sterling, because it doesn't oxidize when it gets soldered. That makes jewelry making much easier.

-Steel. Sometimes I like to work with harder stuff, and especially stainless steel takes a high shine when it's polished.

-Lapis lazuli. This is my favorite stone because of the color and because it is relatively easy to cut, doesn't splinter easily and takes a high shine when polished.



What are your tools of the trade?

-painting: sable brushes, sable/synthetic mix brushes, Liquitex heavy body acrylic colors and any other good brand acrylic colors, Liquitex soluvar archival varnish, glazing medium, self made stay wet box for acrylic colors (made from a walmart box with lid, a styrofoam block, kitchen towel, 2 layers of parchment paper which get pinned onto the styrofoam block that almost floats on water in the box and is wrapped with paper from a kitchen towel roll).

-jewelry making: Dremel rotary tool strongest version with many burrs, cutting discs, sanding discs, polishing wheels and so on.

Ball peen hammer, Jewelers hammer from Fretz (expensive but worth the money).

Sanding paper of various grades with a mandrel for use with the Dremel rotary tool (one of the best inventions, which makes polishing much easier and cheaper).

-music: Ableton Live composing software (DAW). My favorite composing program. Up to now I couldn't find anything I was not able to do with it.
The new version 9 even has a function to transform wav recordings to MIDI.

How long, on average, does it take you to finish one of your paintings?

-Acrylic paintings: can take 2 months or longer. Sometimes it goes faster, maybe even a week. But mostly it takes longer than a week.

-ink/acrylic paintings: often faster than pure acrylic paintings, as the process of mixing inks on the paper together already creates kind of a painting by itself.

-epoxy and glitter paintings, mirror paintings: several days. The epoxy resin needs time to dry before applying a new layer.

-digital paintings: from 1-2 day to weeks, depending on the applied technique. The fastest to make are pure fractal paintings consisting mainly of fractals or parts of them that are mixed together using layer operations in the program GIMP.

Do you have a vision of what your piece will look like before starting or do you go with whatever comes to you?

Sometimes I know already relative exactly how a painting should look in the end, but it is more like an impression I have in mind than a real picture. If I had a real picture already in mind with all proportions and colors, the paintings would get finished much faster.

With jewelry it is different. Most of my pieces I use to make at the moment take about half a day or a day to finish. This is the pure manual work time. Often I plan almost every step of making a piece in mind before I touch a tool. That takes a few hours.

A song usually takes a few days to finish. Similar to painting I sometimes have an idea or impression of how the song should sound.



At what age did you begin painting and do you have any formal training (art school etc)?

I tried to draw skeletons of animals that I saw in a book when I was in Kindergarten, I guess. The first art experience however was building a big elephant from plastic parts (slightly similar to Lego) in Kindergarten and making Rhinos and Elephants from play dough.

When I was in elementary school I got an oil painting set from my uncle for Christmas. I didn't know how to use it, so I just tried around and painted Alpine landscapes on a canvas board.

Later I used the leftovers of this painting set again when I was about 16, and I started drawing and painting in a more serious way. As I had no models, I drew and painted my hands and self portraits and sometimes landscapes and still lives.

During high school I used to draw little ink scrawlings onto the paper on the table, while I was listening to the teacher. These scrawlings were the beginning of my abstract art.

During University I painted with watercolors and oil colors, in the beginning still figurative, later more and more abstract.

From 1996 on, when I joined an art association in Freiburg, Germany, painting began to take more and more space in my life. I was 30 years old then.

I stopped painting from 2001 up to 2006. Then I started painting with watercolors and gel and ink pens again.

In 2007 I started using acrylic colors. After I moved to the US I finally decided to make art a

main part of my life, and I tried out many new materials and techniques. I was 41 then.

I didn't attend art school. Sometimes I read art books and articles on the internet or watch tutorials on youtube, but mostly I learn from trying.

That was different for making jewelry. This would have been impossible without detailed reading of books.

music: I had piano lessons during middle school/high school, but I stopped it to play electric bass in rock bands.

The electronic composing I started in the end of 2009, and I make the music I like to hear. That is the only criteria in most of my artwork. I produce what I like myself.

Are there any artists or other inspirations which have helped you progress with your art?

In the art association in Germany we often discussed techniques. This was interesting and helped to a certain grade (one thing I heard then was from a painter from Tadschikistan. When we discussed glazing technique in oil painting he told me, if the colors won't stick on an intermediate layer of varnish, you can rub a piece of garlic over the varnish, and the colors will stick).

In the US I got to know a jeweler who gave me hints and tips, and the people from the shop where I used to sell my jewelry and paintings for 3 years gave me good advice and ideas also.

Impossible to mention all the other people that influenced and helped me.



What is the most rewarding aspect of completing a work of art for you?

The feeling that it is done and everything fits.

If you polish a piece of jewelry, it often takes a long time until the final high shine appears. This moment, when the metal starts reflecting the light is hard to describe.

What advice do you have for other aspiring artists?

take advice, but don't do exactly what everybody tells you to do, and don't be satisfied with a

piece of work before you really know from inside that it is finished.

Is there anything else you'd like to say in closing?

thanks for the interest in my art, and my website is at [\[link\]](#)