

CONTEMPORARY ART

Turkey



DR. NORBERT TSCHIRPKE



Dr. Norbert Tschirpke is a German conceptual artist, cultural theorist, and social innovator. Trained at the Academy of Fine Arts Münster under Ulrich Erben, he merges artistic, philosophical, and sociological disciplines into a multi-faceted career. Known for his large-scale paintings and projects bridging aesthetics and social engagement, his work has been exhibited internationally and is held in prominent collections such as the Deutsche Bank and HypoVereinsbank. Tschirpke has also initiated major educational and sustainability projects across Germany and Africa.

"My painting begins with color – as space, as mood, as an echo of an inner movement. The background is vast, intense, often monochrome, and carries the emotional weight of the composition. Into this field of color, I insert figurative elements like inlays – concentrated, deliberately placed. They serve as a counterpoint to the surface, a moment of pause within the color space. It is a conceptual form of painting, nourished by two sources: the external and the internal. Social currents, political shifts, and collective tensions flow into the work just as much as personal states, memories, and fragments of biography. Each painting is a place of condensation. The figures do not tell a story directly – they allude, suggest, and leave space. What becomes visible is not always what is being said. It's about what lies in between: between form and feeling, between color and meaning, between presence and absence. Thus, visual worlds emerge that offer fewer answers than they pose questions – open, poetic, and yet precise in their internal structure."

Dr. Norbert Tschirpke

INTERVIEW

Your works combine monumental format with intellectual depth. How do you develop the conceptual foundation of a new painting?

"In principle, I am always interested in current themes. But specific exhibition settings have also inspired new motifs. Fundamentally, I'm concerned with the relationship between different pictorial layers – the image motif lies on the background. My first works in this direction were large urban landscapes, drawn over a colored background. From this concept, I gradually developed the idea of miniature motifs on expansive, colored backgrounds. One of the first paintings from this approach was Lenin advancing on a red background – at that time, the Berlin Wall had just fallen, and communism was receding. That's why I portrayed Lenin as the representative of communism advancing forward. The painting was a great success – as a large oil painting, as an etching, and as a preparatory sketch on paper."



In your series Rulers and Saints, the aesthetic seems to overshadow the political message. What did you aim to convey?

"The starting point was actually the exhibition space at the museum in Hamm, Westphalia. My task was to present works in two rooms with very different ceiling heights – one resembling a hall, the other more standard. I envisioned narrow, tall paintings that would visually connect the two. My first thought was the film character Sissi, but that seemed too superficial. Rulers had fascinated me since childhood – I used to imagine myself as the son of a king. The placement of the figures at the bottom of the canvas was driven by aesthetic reasons. As I progressed with the series, I became aware of its political implications. In the museum, democratic viewers had to bow down before the rulers in order to observe the figures closely. No democrat wants to bow to autocrats – but in the interest of engaging with the art, they did."

Monochromy and perfect illusion – how do you approach this tension technically and conceptually?

"Initially, I painted the motifs directly onto the colored backgrounds. But I realized this imposed a hierarchy – background versus motif. So I began by laying down the background first and then drawing the outlines of the figures into the wet paint using a toothpick. I would then remove the color from these outlines with a wooden spatula and later integrate the figures into the cleared space. From that point onward, the motif and background were equal – like inlays on a wooden cabinet, for example. This technique merges opposites: the large backgrounds are applied expressively (with big brushes, squeegees, or poured paint), while the small figurative elements are painted meticulously with fine brushes."

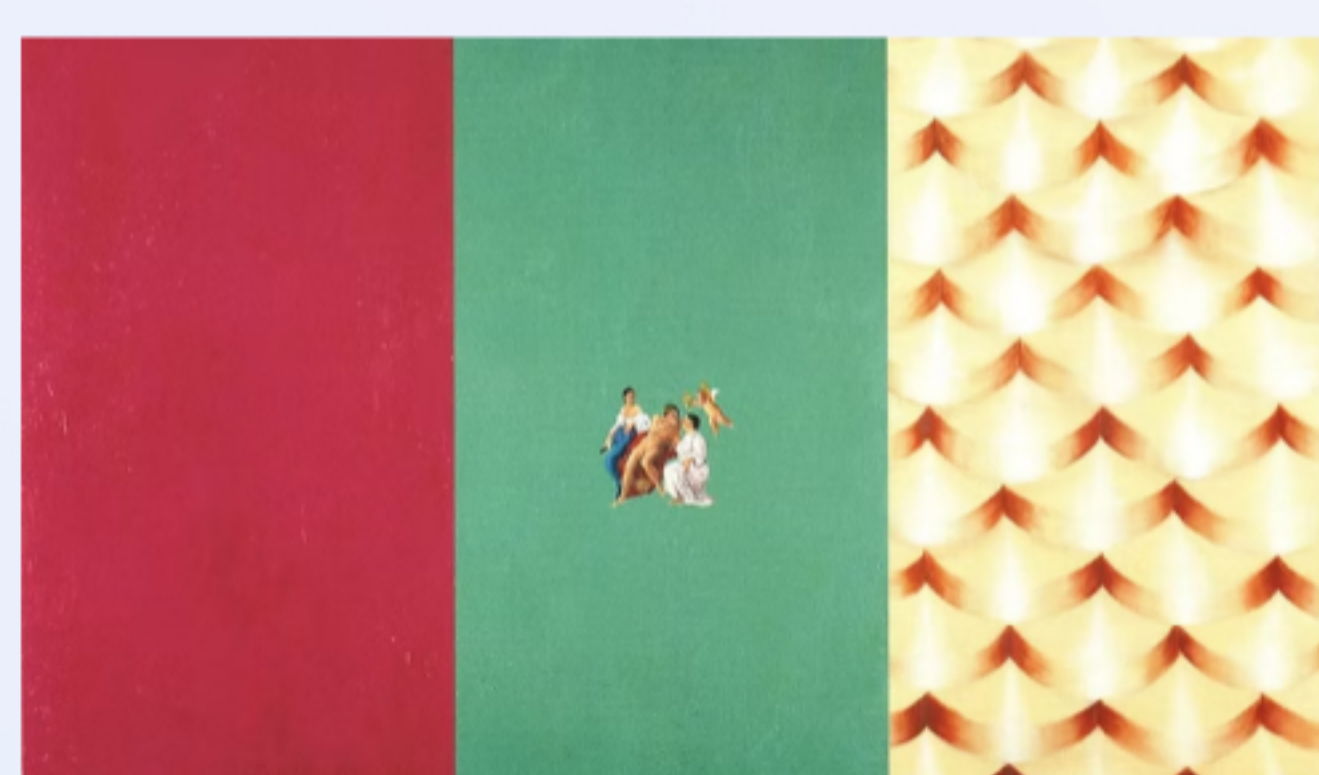
You studied biology, pedagogy, and philosophy. How do these disciplines shape your artistic language?

"Alongside my studies in free painting at the Münster Art Academy, I also explored perception from a scientific perspective. Art opened up a vast horizon for me – but I also wanted to understand the world through a rational lens. That's why I describe my approach as conceptual art, with the technical execution serving as the medium for the conceptual content."



You studied with Bazon Brock – what influence did that have on your understanding of art and society?

"At the Art Academy in Münster, I studied painting in the class of Ulrich Erben, who had a profound influence on my artistic development. His focus on color application and reduction to essentials left a lasting impression. I later completed my doctorate in communication design under Bazon Brock, whose concept of art as boundless communication shaped my thinking and expanded my thematic horizons."



You've initiated cultural and educational projects in Germany and Nigeria. What drives your interdisciplinary engagement?

"Ultimately, it stems from the same motivation mentioned in question 4: a deep curiosity about all aspects of human activity. A well-designed project can have an aesthetic dimension as well."

In your view, can art still contribute to societal or educational change today? If so, how?

"Art can open eyes and have a liberating, cathartic effect, because it speaks to the emotional side of the human being. It can stimulate deeper thinking. I believe that people are not solely cognitive beings focused on survival – they also respond emotionally to personal challenges. Often, final decisions are made emotionally, even after long rational deliberation. Art can support this process."

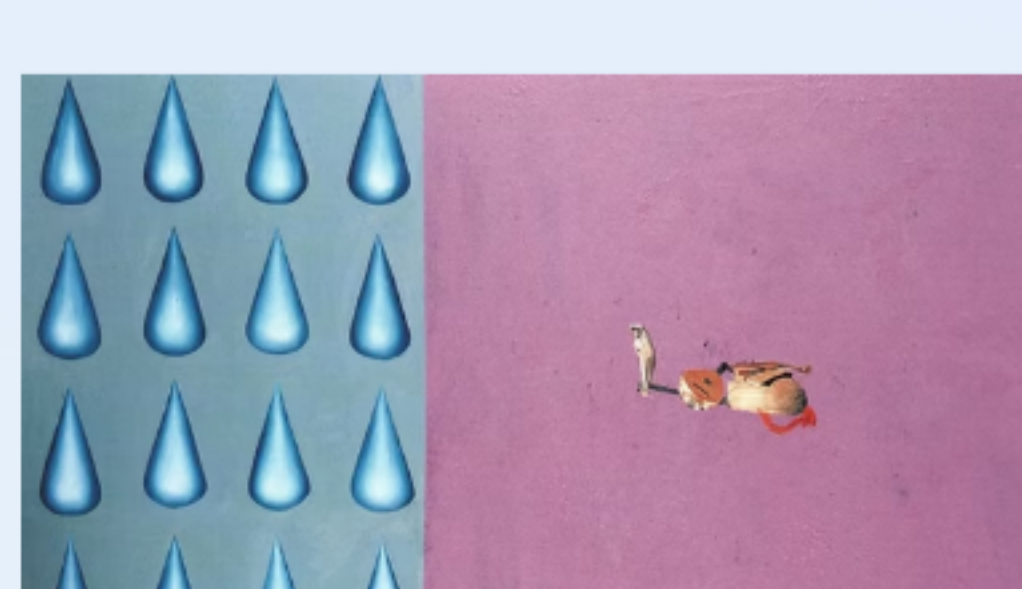
Your works are characterized by an oversized format. What role does physical scale play in conveying your message?

"As mentioned in question 3, contrasts like large/small shape my artistic approach and technique. With large-format works, I want viewers to feel surrounded by the color space – to feel as if they are inside the painting."



What is your technical and emotional process when starting a work that spans several meters?

"It always begins with smaller preparatory sketches and drawings, including color studies. Scaling up to the final size is then a technical step. The power of color unfolds with particular intensity on large canvases – which creates strong emotional resonance, despite the technical process. Maximum emotionality arises when the background and the figures harmonize perfectly. My approach is inherently synesthetic – I associate each figure with a certain color. If color and motif don't communicate well, the painting fails. When they complement each other, the painting succeeds."



You once worked on a cradle-to-cradle concept for global recycling. Does ecological awareness also play a role in your art?

"I'm no longer actively pursuing that cradle-to-cradle concept. So far, I haven't seen an ecological consciousness reflected in my art. I also don't view art as inherently tied to sustainability concepts."

You once worked on a cradle-to-cradle concept for global recycling. Does looking back – do you recognize a common thread that runs through your early exhibitions to your current projects?

"The central thread is my ongoing desire to explore the world with curiosity and to recognize the structures that hold it together."



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