

### Case Study 3 - Isabell Schaupp

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*I wouldn't call myself an enamel artist although my jewellery work contains a lot of enamel. I appreciate its haptic properties, its fragility and its possibilities of colors and graphic effects. But for all that the enamel parts are just one aspect of my work, which - like the other parts - 'serve' to tell my stories and express my feelings.*

Isabell Schaupp

After an apprenticeship in carpentry and a career in nursing Isabell Schaupp determined to undertake a formal study of jewellery, a subject that she describes as having 'haunted' her for some time. In pursuit of this change of career she relocated to Hildesheim (Germany) where she studied Metal Design at the University of Applied Science and Arts and where, upon her graduation in 2007, she established her own studio.

Schaupp began experimenting with enamel early on in her studies, drawn to its fragility, 'haptic properties' and its ability to bring colour to her work. Her college course provided only a limited introduction to enamel techniques so she has developed much of what she employs in her current practice through experimentation and an instinctive approach to the material, building on her skills with every piece created. Although motivated by a desire to 'use the technique in a more or less proper way' to some extent she feels that this lack of formal training has allowed her to take a more open and innovative approach to the material.

In a dialogue about the place of skill in contemporary enamel practice she discussed her approach to enamel saying, 'you could object that I use enamel more as a means to an end. Even more as the enameled piece is just one component of the jewel', she goes on to say,

'The term 'skill' in this context doesn't mean to me that you have to know absolutely everything there is to know about a technique, but knowing as much as you need to express yourself exactly the way you want to. And if you don't know how, you have to practice till you're able to do it.'

One could argue that her non-traditional approach is illustrated by the fact that she is happy to use other materials, such as lacquer, alongside enamel to bring colour to her work, something more traditionally trained enamellers might be reluctant to do.

Schaupp was keen to find a way to use photographic imagery within her work and following a period of research discovered that she could achieve this through the use of enamel photo-transfers. While early work such as the 'Verbindungen' (Connections) series used these photo-transfers to reproduce old family photographs, more recent work has seen her use the technique as a way of including more technical and abstracted imagery in her work.



Month Brooch No.5 enamel, phototransfer, copper, silver and iron 2009

Her output is influenced by an extensive period of travel in the mid 90s and by her second career in nursing which she still pursues alongside her work as a jewellery maker. She also lists nature and science as important influences on her work. Although Schaupp uses enamel in almost all her pieces her work is characterised by its use of mixed materials, including wire, wood, stones, and beads all of which are unified by the use of a minimal colour palette of black, white and red.



Month Brooch no.6 enamel, phototransfer, copper, silver, iron and white agate  
2009

Over time the structures of her pieces have become more complex. The constructed elements explore line, negative space and repetition. Pieces juxtapose technical structures with organic form that reference flora and fauna. She creates funnel, satellite and tentacle-like wire structures that protrude from the two-dimensional enamelled surface. These structures are often squashed flat and are also repeated as photo-transfer images applied to the white enamel surface thus creating an interplay between the two and three-dimensional aspects of the work. She describes the three-dimensional forms that reach out to explore the space around them thus,

'Due to their partly technical partly organic appearing shapes my jewellery works seem to belong to a yet unknown flora and fauna, sometimes machinery. The objects become minute amulets and catalysts, attempting to establish direct contact between wearer and environment.'

Although only a few years into her professional practice the jewellery of Isabell Schaupp is receiving wide recognition, both in Europe and the USA with pieces having been included in the influential Schmuck exhibition in Munich, at Sofa in New York and to be seen on display at Collect in London.



Tweedflower No.9, brooch enamel, phototransfer, copper, silver, wood and acrylic  
2009