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COLLECT ART

One shade

Infinite voices

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Special Edition

ONE COLOR CHALLENGE

Part 1

Caro Hirt

SHADE OTTO, Acrylic and mixed media on canvas,140x110 cm, 2026



"My work begins with movement, material and an intuitive response to what happens on the surface. I rarely follow a fixed composition. Instead, I allow layers, gestures, traces and the physical behaviour of the materials to guide the painting. I am interested in the tension between control and coincidence: paint can be brushed, scraped, poured, rubbed or removed; pigments can remain powdery or become embedded in binder; iron can oxidise and continue to change the surface. These processes create structures that cannot be fully planned and therefore remain alive."

Caro Hirt is a contemporary artist based near Stuttgart, Germany. Originally trained as a master goldsmith and later in business administration, she brings a strong sensitivity for material, surface and structure into her artistic practice. Her work is rooted in abstract painting and an intuitive, process-driven approach. She works primarily with acrylic and oil on canvas, often expanding the painted surface through pigments, iron, oxidation, graphite, pastel, ink and other materials. The physical behaviour of these materials is an essential part of her visual language. Hirt's paintings move between spontaneity and control, density and openness, gesture and stillness. Nature, travel, memory and material transformation often form the starting point, but the works remain deliberately open to individual interpretation. Her current series *SHADES* explores the expressive possibilities of colour through monochromatic fields, material contrasts and radically different approaches to a single hue.



Your background as a master goldsmith has given you an intimate understanding of materials, surfaces, and structure. How does this earlier craftsmanship continue to influence your approach to abstract painting?

Goldsmithing taught me that every material has its own character and limits. You learn to observe how it responds, how it resists, and how even a small intervention can change the whole. That way of looking has stayed with me. Today, I work much more freely, but my understanding of materials remains fundamental. Craftsmanship gives me the confidence to experiment, to take risks, and to know when precision matters – and when it is better to let something happen

You allow movement, gestures, and the physical behaviour of materials to guide your compositions rather than following a fixed plan. How do you recognise when a painting has reached its own natural direction?

I don't wait for a painting to tell me it is finished. I make that decision, often after a great deal of looking, changing, and sometimes removing. I regularly step back, observe the work from a distance and in different light. I want to understand whether the composition holds together, whether its tensions are balanced, and whether another intervention would genuinely add something. Knowing when to stop is just as important to me as knowing when to intervene. Sometimes the most deliberate decision is to leave something untouched.

Your practice explores the tension between control and coincidence. How much do you need to direct the materials, and how much do you allow them to surprise you?

I establish the starting conditions quite deliberately: the materials, pigments, tools, and initial direction of movement. From there, I pay close attention to what actually happens. An unexpected trace, a run of pigment, or the way iron begins to oxidise can introduce something I could never have designed in advance. Those moments

SHADE MOSS, Acrylic on canvas, 140x110 cm, 2026

are often particularly interesting. But I don't keep every accident. I decide what belongs to the painting, what needs to be developed further, and what has to go. For me, intuition and conscious decision-making are not opposites. They work together.

Nature, travel, and material transformation often inspire your work, yet you avoid direct representation. What happens when an external experience becomes an abstract visual language rather than an image of something recognisable?

Over time, an experience often loses its literal details and leaves behind something more concentrated: a particular rhythm, colour, temperature, or physical sensation. In OCRE – WANDERING IN ROUSSILLON, for example, I wasn't interested in reproducing a recognisable landscape. What stayed with me was the presence of ochre, the mineral character of the place, and the impression of its textures and layers. These memories became decisions about pigments, surface, and movement. The painting originates from a real place, but it doesn't require the viewer to recognise that place. It has become something independent of its source.



SHADE BLUE
Acrylic on canvas,
140x110 cm
2026

OCRE – WANDERING IN ROUSSILLON
Acrylic, binder and natural ochre pigments on canvas
140x110 cm
2026



In your SHADES series, you explore how far a single colour can be pushed without losing its identity. What interests you about discovering the many emotional and material possibilities hidden within one hue?

The four monochrome works were created specifically for the ONE COLOUR CHALLENGE and form a deliberate counterpoint to my usual painting practice. I normally work predominantly on a large scale, combining different, often contrasting colour worlds with a wide range of materials. Colour, movement, textures and material transformations enter into a complex dialogue. That is precisely why I was drawn to the challenge of limiting each of these four works to a single colour family. For me, working monochromatically does not mean using just one pigment or one fixed shade. Within a colour family, I can experiment with different pigments, values, colour temperatures, transparencies and surface textures. What initially appears to be a limitation actually opens up an astonishing range of possibilities. Suddenly, even the smallest differences become significant. A blue can feel calm

and expansive in one area, dense, intense and almost restless in another. I am interested in how far these variations can develop while the painting still retains a clear colour identity. For me, SHADES is about discovering complexity within an apparent limitation.

You work with pigments, iron, oxidation, graphite, and other materials that undergo physical transformation. What draws you to processes that introduce unpredictability and change into the surface?

I am interested in materials that carry evidence of a real process rather than merely imitate one. Oxidation, for example, is not an effect I paint to resemble rust. It is a chemical reaction taking place within the work. Pigments settle, surfaces change, and time becomes part of the process. I can initiate these transformations and influence their direction, but I cannot completely predict the outcome. That interaction between material behaviour and artistic intention is what fascinates me. It produces structures that would be difficult to achieve through deliberate painting alone.

You associate different colours with distinct sensations and forms of movement. How do you translate these intuitive associations into texture, gesture, and composition?

Certain colours suggest particular movements or material qualities to me, but these associations are starting points rather than fixed rules. Green may lead me towards branching, overlapping gestures, while blue might encourage flowing movements or a sense of depth. Ochre can invite scraping and abrasion, revealing something mineral and sedimentary. With white, even the smallest changes in texture, shadow, and transparency become important. But I also allow the painting to contradict those initial associations. What happens on the surface can change my direction entirely. The gesture grows out of my interaction with the colour and material, rather than following a predetermined visual formula.

Your paintings move between density and openness, gesture and stillness. How do you create a sense of balance between what is revealed on the surface and what remains concealed beneath its layers?

I pay a great deal of attention to what I leave alone. An intense passage needs somewhere to breathe. Otherwise, everything competes for attention, and the painting loses its tension. I often allow traces of earlier stages to remain visible through transparent layers, edges, or areas where paint has been partially removed. These marks reveal something about the process without exposing everything. I don't believe every part of a painting needs to be explained or fully resolved. Sometimes a suggestion of what lies beneath the surface creates more interest than showing it completely.

You describe colour as carrying atmosphere, memory, temperature, and material character. How do personal experiences and memories influence the colours you choose?

When I remember a place, I rarely see it as a photograph. What remains is often the quality of light, the temperature, or the particular atmosphere of a moment. Madeira, for example, stays with me through its different greens, deep blues, and the changing relationship between clarity and mist. These impressions can remain long after the details of a particular view have faded. I don't try to recreate the landscape. I work with what the experience has left behind, allowing those memories to become a starting point for colour, movement, and material. Once I begin painting, the work develops its own direction.

You are interested in the moment when a painting stops describing something and becomes an experience in itself. What do you hope viewers discover when they encounter your work without searching for a recognisable subject?

I would rather people experience a painting than try to solve it. They don't need to see what I saw or understand where the work began. Someone may respond to a colour, a particular texture, or the relationship between movement and stillness. Another person may discover something entirely different. Those responses can also change with distance, light, or the time someone spends in front of the painting. I don't want to prescribe what people should see or feel. I want to leave room for their own associations, memories, and emotions. For me, that freedom is an essential part of encountering art.