

Gina Gass

Biography

Gina Gass was born in Cologne, Germany, in 1946. In 1948 her family moved to East Berlin. Gina majored in cultural studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Following in the footsteps of her father, a well-known documentary filmmaker, she then worked as a director's assistant at the DEFA and as a documentarist at the Berlin Film Archives. She did not start painting until 1975. At the home of friends, she met a painter, Eberhard Hückstädt, who took notice of her talent. In his studio, in Schwedt on the Oder, Gina Gass received her artistic training. In 1980 she became a member of the of the Association of Figurative Artists – in former East Germany, an unavoidable prerequisite for obtaining commissions as a painter. That is, government commissions. She created paintings for a kindergarten, a women's clinic. In 1984 she emigrated with her family from Schwedt on the Oder to Hannover, in West Germany. For professional reasons – to finally be able to travel and visit the locales of art history – and also for political ones.

1946	Born in Cologne, Germany
	Completed her studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin, worked as editorial assistant at the DEFA film studio for documentary films in Berlin, later employed as member of the film science staff at the State Film Archive in Berlin.
1947	Family moves to East Berlin
1952-1964	Completes primary education
1964	Enrolled in Humboldt University in Berlin
1964-1969	Concentrates studies in philosophy and theater arts and culture
1969	Editorial assistant at DEFA studios in Berlin making documentary films
1970	Staff member at film archives in Berlin
1974	Begins her artistic education in the painting workshop of Eberhard Hueckstaedt. This relationship is to last 19 years.
	Since 1975 Artistically active as painter, lived and worked in Schwedt.
1976	Starts her career as a professional painter
1984	Moves to West Germany and experiences an expanded opportunity to capitalize on her extensive training and highly developed skills

- 1985 Travels to Provence in France. Sketches and travel impressions significantly influence her work.
- 85-Present Regular exhibitions in Berlin, Bonn, Hannover, Cologne, Vienna and other European cities. Travels to study in Italy, France and Spain.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1985 Galerie Depelmann, Langenhagen
- 1986 Theater am Aegi, Hannover
- 1987 Galerie Depelmann, Langenhagen
Galerie Schwedenkate, Eutin
- 1988 Galerie Dietz, Meckenheim
Galerie im Rathaus, Melle
- 1989 Galerie Seifert-Binder, Muenchen
Galerie Bulla, Menden
- 1990 Thurmersaal, Bochum
Galerie Depelmann, Langenhagen (Katalog)
- 1991 Galerie Schwedenkate, Eutin
Galerie Glanz, Erfstadt-Lechenich
- 1992 Galerie im Glashaus, Derneburg
- 1993 Galerie Zewen
- 1994 Galerie Hohmann, Walsrode
Galerie Klett, Fredelsloh
Galerie Depelmann, Langenhagen
- 1996 Kunst im Bahnhof, Springe
Kunstverein Attendorn, Attendorn
- 1997 Galerie Glanz, Erfstadt-Lechenich
Thüringer Filmbuero Schloss Kromsdorf, Weimar
Neues Kreishaus, Hannover
- 1998 Galerie am Buttermarkt, Koeln

1999	Stadtische Galerie, Lehrte Galerie Depelmann, Langenhagen
2000	The Hart Gallery, Carmel, California/USA The Hart Gallery, Chicago, Illinois/USA

Later Gina Gass frequently traveled to Italy, on the trail of fresco painting. In Florence, Rome, Padua she was finally able to recapitulate several chapters of art history in the original. She returns to Italy frequently. In Civitella, near Orvieto, where the mayor and two Germans have founded a center for artists, she gives painting classes.

The fresco-like manner of some of her pictures may stem from this. Gina Gass discovered the technique by herself some years ago. She scrapes the ground with a spatula, so that the colors, as if laid down centuries ago, seem to be peeling. Grains of sand and chalk marks intensify this effect. As if measuring the beat of the space, which they divide into dense and light fields: into places where matter coagulates and others where it flows apart.

But first she acquired the technique of pure gouache painting. This offers her the possibility to paint over surfaces, while letting the tones of the substratum shine through, and to refract the colors with white, to “let them become opaque, restrained”.

Why such restraint? The painter defends herself: “I can’t explain it.” Whenever she starts out with clear, pure colors, they become revised in the course of the painting process. “I am a person with lots of refractions,” she says. And also one who observes the doings of other people from a distance, set apart, yet touched by what she sees.

Herself and others – they are mysterious, the figures that emerge from the color. Slim, elongated silhouettes. Eyes, mouth, nose, all swallowed by the color. A black line, a few sketchy strokes were enough to draw an outline. Whether they are men or women is only hinted at by the curve of a waist or the breadth of a back. What is important is the movement, the tension that puts them in relation to each other. They stand on the picture’s surface as if it were a stage, sometimes framed by a rectangle, showcase-like. In other pictures they tower in the foreground, on this side of the peephole, through which someone else is looking out. Take, for example, “In Front of the Window”. A slender female body is walking through a nighttime world planted with crosses. Head bent, arms angled out, her legs move forward in a dance step, about to cross over the picture’s front edge. One who is stepping out over hill and dale into free spaces. Behind her, in the brightly lit square of a window, two silhouettes watch, already small and indistinct, like phantoms of memory. A picture of separation.

In other places the color indicates the distance that separates people from each other. It separates space into surfaces, spots, strips, traces, and volumes. Close together, gaping open, or flowing into one another, all the color zones are incommensurable with one another. There is no horizon that could connect them, no bridge between the figures that strive upwards from the various backgrounds. When they are formed into groups, the color

attributes their different sizes to different forms of existence. If they are next to each other, on the same level, it lets the blackness that fills them become silent. Pictures that speak of the impossibility of speaking with one another.

Even when a basic color tone and a vanishing point lead us to believe in the existence of a common terrain, dialogue proves to be impossible. In "In Front of Blue" we can see from the angle of the bodies that populate the now indigo, now light blue sky that they are turning toward one another. But there is no point where they could meet. They continue to float, unrelated, in space, like arrogant angels. But sometimes in the pictures of Gina Gass we also encounter figures that contain two in one, a lighter and a darker part. Strong, dark shoulders over a tender, pink-yellow ribcage. Black and white lines that divide a veiled figure in two.

"The pictures are a part of me," she explains. "You go through different life phases, through happy ones, through tragic ones, through sad ones, serious ones, through light, through dark..." Life, she says dictates her pictures. After all, she does believe in the possibility of translating feelings and thoughts into pictures. Painting, she concludes, doesn't have words to express these things. That's why she needs to rely on colors, shapes, and symbols.