

As Ngozi Schommers likes to say, 'Form is very important to me. I love lines and forms.'

In life, like in poetry and music, repetition makes a thing tangible. Repetition implies structure, shows a pattern, and brings about meaning. Repetition may imply sameness, but as the philosopher Giles Deleuze already established, "Repetition is not generality." A text on The Chicago School of Media Theory website simplifies Deleuze's philosophy in his book *Repetition and Difference*. It states: "A glimpse of Deleuze's discussion and enrichment of philosophical thought on repetition shows the possibilities of thinking about repetition in a vast array of categories, including mimesis and invention, sameness and difference, habit and creativity." In this context of looking at repetition as a dynamic activity, we can best appreciate its use in Schommers' works.

Schommers creates figurative and abstract works with various materials and media. In her decade long practice, form, materials, and colours play critical roles. How the forms and materials occupy space is essential. A dominant material she uses is paper, which generally involves perforating it to generate confetti. Papers become dots, and dots become forms. The process of producing and using confetti is painstakingly repetitive. It requires focus, as multiple things are happening simultaneously: fragmentation, displacement, and creation.

Schommers finds freedom and satisfaction in the mechanical process of manipulating tiny materials into distinct and remarkable pieces. Paper is also the support material for most of her works. Looking through her collection, the materials typically include regular and handmade papers. Small drawings are worked on using charcoal on handmade paper. Larger artworks often include perforated paper, confetti, and a mix of items like ink, acrylic paint, water colour, sequin, photo print or gold leaf.

In most compositions, regardless of the materials used, full human figures or fragmented bodies occupy off-centre positions, floating, swirling, or sitting alone in space. Sometimes these figures, generally women, are placed on colourful backgrounds surrounded by plants and bright flowers or patterns. In these presentations, the open space is deliberate and gives the impression that invisible elements occupy it. But both the visible and invisible bodies coexist peacefully. In different works, the subjects are more vulnerable and want to be alone in their corner of the world. And other works feature human figures that are grounded and centred but look at the world through a hollow gaze. Their eyes deny access to their world. This detached presence is achieved in other ways with faces that are covered with flowers in some works and figures with their back turned to the world in others.

Her self-portraits are created using mirrors but are not presented as mirrored forms. First, Schommers draws a photo of the mirrored face onto a paper and then, in the process of copying and recopying, erases and reshapes some parts until a distorted, 'new' face emerges. This mirroring and distorting process is a way of self-perception and of seeing others. It also finds its way into the exhibition space where she installs mirrors too. The mirrors create a surface for seeing oneself, the others, and the environment where these observations take place.

Colours play aesthetic and metaphorical roles too. A recent artwork and her exhibition at 14a in Hamburg, Germany, are named after the midnight blue colour. In the work *Midnight Blue*, a colourfully dressed lone female figure on the left side of the mixed media work is surrounded by a vast cloud of midnight blue. Her empty eyes stare at us. The dark blue hues typically prompt thoughts of dark moods. For Schommers, however, midnight blue signifies the presence of light, giving her confidence. Colours shift and move across pieces like certain plants and flowers appear in different seasons. There is no surprise in this, considering that Schommers derives her colour inspiration from nature, especially from the plants and flowers around her in Germany and Ghana. Sometimes she draws inspiration from her childhood memories too. The repetitive presence of green comes from growing up in the eastern part of Nigeria, where she regularly followed her father to a field where he cultivated vegetables for his family.

In addition to using certain colours, other recurring symbols and patterns play significant roles. Butterflies, green plants, and bright flowers stand as metaphors for freedom, growth, and escape. The fabric around the neck of the figure in *Midnight Blue* is also recurring and known as Akwete among the Igbo people in Nigeria. Akwete is a special fabric woven through an old technique, symbolising tradition. Schommers attributes its presence in her works to her Igbo heritage and to the influence of her mother and grandmother. Another textile frequently present is the George wrapper, also commonly used among the Igbos.

Returning to Deleuze's philosophy, we can see that Schommers' use of repetition is more than a habit or mechanical act. Instead, there is an intentional use of repetition that results in variation and uniqueness. And what appears as irregular and off-centre enhance our understanding of her work and contribute to their aesthetic effect.

Bringing all these observations together, one finds that Schommers' works weave the personal with the historical and the communal. Her worldview is influenced by her cross-cultural background and experiences growing up as an Igbo person in Nigeria and living as an African in Germany. Overall, we can filter the different themes in her works into two: perception and inclusion. How do we appear, how are we perceived, and what is our relationship with the other? Schommers presents these ideas and questions in subtle measures throughout her works.

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