

## Featured Dojo-cho, February 2011



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Division 3

Before I started Aikido I was looking into various dance forms and self-defense for women. After two years I lost interest in “rough” self-defense training but still wanted to practice a martial art. This is how my Aikido-journey began.

In 1993 I began my studies at Zuerichs Aikikai with multiple teachers, such as Hans Balmer, Marianne Nachbaur and Jacob Spälti. At this time I had just finished my studies at Zurich University of Arts as a teacher for arts and crafts. I trained almost every day since the dojo was just across the river from where I lived. After 5 years of intense training I stopped Aikido because of problems with my wrists and began another study of healing arts which I started in a different part of Switzerland.

Because of my love of expression through movement, I continued to study contact improvisation and eastern dance. I worked at a public school as a teacher and started giving eastern dance classes.

In 2002 I assisted in a self-defense summer camp for girls and the children encouraged me to train with them. After this experience I went back on the mat to Aikido and became a self-defense instructor. For a short time I was Uchideshi in Santa Fe with Wolfgang Baumgartner

and in 2006 I took my Shodan with Rosmarie Herzig in Switzerland.

After some deep insights, which made me question my life to the roots, I became a committed long-term uchideshi at Patrick Cassidy's Dojo in Montreux, Switzerland for one and half years. This experience changed my life completely, which led my husband Peter and I to open "Aikido Unlimited" in 2009 in Uster, Switzerland. Uster is a small but fast growing City close to Zurich. Aikido Unlimited is a full time dojo that offers morning to evening classes with age groups ranging from kids, adolescents and adults. Along with the Aikido we also offer "Insight Self Defense", Meditation, and "Dancing Yoga". To live and practice Aikido daily on and off the mat with my partner and the community is a immense and beautiful thing. It is a great gift to be able to practice and teach Aikido and doing so to deepen the trust in life and in the power of transformation.

### ***My most Memorable Aikido Experience***

An important shift in my Aikido practice was a moment when I realized that I still was afraid of real connection with other people. There was still a "self-defense" oriented conception in my mind. This image I carried for a long time was so far away from my heart and the normal sized slim woman I am. It was a moment in a Jiuwaza, when Patrick stopped me and my uke, and asked me "Do you know what it means to connect? It means to touch a person!" The simplicity of that sentence was a shock to me and something shifted inside. I also was deeply ashamed because I realized that my understanding of Aikido previous to this moment was not that great. How could I connect with the world with the fear of being touched by it, and the constant need to push everything that challenged me and wanted to be acknowledged away? From then on I slowly started to allow myself to express strength in a new way, to express beauty, spontaneity, and creativity in Aikido while maintaining my femininity and still express great power. Meaning the unfolding of who I am already, and not having to become someone else while training a martial art.