

Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

Margit Palme
The Gaze
English Translations



Margit Palme

Margit Palme was born in 1939 in Amstetten, where she grew up with her two sisters. Her childhood takes place during the last years of the Second World War and the first of the post-war period when the Russians occupy her hometown. She attends grammar school in Amstetten.

- 1953–56 Aged 14, she continues her education at the Vienna-Hetzendorf fashion school.
- 1956–61 Palme studies graphic design under Alsons Ortner, the head of the Linzer Kunstschule. One of her fellow students is the future Linz artist Elfriede Trautner, who like Margit is particularly interested in the etching technique. Margit adopts her artistic name Palme from the maternal side of her family.
- 1957 Together with Peter Kubovsky, a graduate of the Linz art school and nine years her senior, Margit moves to the Egon-Hofmann-Haus studio building in Dörfl 3, Linz, which is sponsored by the Kulturring der Wirtschaft Upper Austria. The building combines workspaces and temporary accommodation for artists.
- 1962 Receipt of a scholarship offered as part of the Salzburg Summer Academy to attend a lithography course held by Slavi Soucek at the „Graphische Versuchswerkstätte“ in the Salzburg Residenz.
- 1960, 1963 Margit Palme participates in the Innsbruck Youth Culture Week during which she makes some important long-term friends such as the writer Herbert Rosendorfer and the journalist Ludwig Plakolb. She is awarded third prize at the 1963 Youth Culture Week.
- 1967 The first one-woman exhibition entitled *Margit Palme / Radierungen* is held at the MAERZ artists' association and is opened by Alfons Ortner. Margit Palme receives the Theodor Körner Prize, which was first awarded in 1953 in order to provide financial support for up-and-coming talent.
- 1968 Participation in the *MAERZ Graphics and Sculpture* exhibition organized by Peter Kubovsky at the Bratří Čapků Gallery in Prague. The exhibition takes place in the year of the Prague Spring. Its political relevance is

emphasised by the opening speaker, the then head of the Austrian embassy in Prague, Rudolf Kirchschräger. In return, Czech artists exhibit in the rooms of the MAERZ in Linz.

- 1970 Exhibition in the MAERZ Gallery on the Taubenmarkt in Linz entitled *Zeit der Dame*. The MAERZ president, architect Karl Rebhahn, gives the opening address.
- 1973–1999 Teaching assignment for the Textile Design Master Class at the Linz Art Academy
- 1978 Receipt of a scholarship from the province of Lower Austria
- 1979 Participation in an exhibition at the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Kulturring der Wirtschaft Upper Austria. Among other items, Palme shows the aquatint etching *Vögel müssen Federn lassen ...* from 1979.
- 1982 Prize of the province of Salzburg at the 18th Austrian Graphic Design Competition in Innsbruck for the aquatint etching *Kontaktnahme*.
- 1986 Exhibition at the Villa Toscana, Gmunden. Margit Palme's aquatint etching *Phönix* appears on the cover of *LIVA Kalendarium*, the programme magazine of the Linz Veranstaltungsgesellschaft. At the same time, an exhibition of Palme's works is shown in the Brucknerhaus Café.
- 1993 Participation in the 1st International Graphic Art Biennale in Maastricht.
- 1999 Award of the title of university professor. The artist leaves the art school and retires.
- 2000 Award of the Cultural Medal of the City of Linz.
- 2002 The brochure *Sports* is published with a text by Martin Hochleitner. Participation in the *Österreichische Graphik* travelling graphic art exhibition in Halle an der Saale, Germany.
- 2003 Participation in the exhibition at the Lower Austrian Documentation Center for Modern Art, St. Pölten.

- 2004 Participation in the *Paulas Home* women's exhibition at the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, curated by Angelika Gillmayr and Elisabeth Nowak-Thaller.
- 2008 Participation in the exhibition *Tür an Tür* at the Nordico Stadtmuseum Linz curated by Angelika Gillmayr. Alongside exhibits from Margit Palme, the show features works by 71 other artists created in the Egon-Hofmann-Haus.
- 2009 Award of the Heinrich Gleißner Prize. This Upper Austrian cultural prize honours the life's work of artists.
- 2010 Margit Palme is represented in the exhibition *Tabakfabrik* at the Nordico Stadtmuseum Linz with the aquatint etching *The Lady is for Fire*, created in 1973.
- 2011 Participation in the exhibition *Im Garten* at the Nordico Stadtmuseum Linz with the aquatint *Sleeping Girl*.
- 2013 Generous donation of more than 560 aquatints and drawings to the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz
- 2022/23 Participation with six aquatint etchings in the exhibition *What the fem*?. Feminist Perspectives 1950 to Today* at the Nordico Stadtmuseum Linz, curated by Klaudia Kreslehner. Participation with a series of aquatint etchings in the exhibition *Das Tier in Dir* curated by Manuela Ammer and Ulrike Müller at the mumok, Vienna. The exhibition reflects upon family and gender relations, socialization, domestication and colonial history.
- 2023/24 Participation with thirteen aquatint etchings in the *Zurich Biennale* curated by Mitchell Anderson and Daniel Baumann at the Kunsthalle Zurich. Participation in the exhibition *Ulrike Müller. Monument to My Paper Body* at the Ludwig Forum in Aachen, Germany, curated by Eva Birkenstock. Inclusion of twenty aquatints in the Ludwig Forum's collection. In December 2023 Awarded the Grand State Prize for Culture (Alfred Kubin Prize).
- 2024 Solo exhibition *Margit Palme. Der Blick* at the Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz

Quotes

I am a woman. Why not? I'm just as good as a man.

Margit Palme (1)

The aquatint etchings are always based on sketches, which I execute in pencil and accentuate with areas of colour. In the past, I regarded these sketches simply as outlines. However, I have gradually come to increasingly appreciate this form of original drawing. I notice that more and more of my sketches can also exist as independent drawings.

Margit Palme (2)

L'autofiction is the Parisian buzzword for the dissimilarity of a self-portrait, which apart from dissimilarity also puts similarity into our mouths. [...] It means nothing more than that when we talk about ourselves, we cannot help but invent. We construct connections, to shorten one thing or add another. We select part of an image, to stylize what we have seen and experienced.

Teresa Präauer (3)

Irrespective of their poses, women display their unmistakable style and are aware of their charms. They move on the world's stage in the knowledge that they will be seen and judged by others. They are aware of (male) attention and have learned how to deal with it.

Brigitte Reutner-Doneus (4)

In her works, Margit Palme refers to changes in meaning, to the often no longer entirely familiar symbolism of individual accessories, clothing and pieces of jewellery and to the slow slipping away of the unambiguous legibility of symbols that have expressed the class and group affiliations of different eras.

Verena Dengler (5)

I also enjoy talking to younger women as this enables me to find out a great deal about how they cope with life, what they busy are doing and their view of the world. These conversations are particularly fruitful for me, because I enjoy living in the present and I also like to dress fashionably. I'm not stuck in the past, but am interested in the world in which I live.

Margit Palme (6)

We often played circus. We stretched a rope, covered it with a blanket and jumped around in front of it like acrobats. That was our own invention. Small circuses with acrobats and clowns occasionally came to Amstetten. There were always animal acts, too. But I was most fascinated by the menageries. I would often stand there for hours and watch the animals. I only got to know predators, giraffes and monkeys later at Schönbrunn Zoo.

Margit Palme (7)

Perhaps there is something else in Palme's examination of femininity as an image that goes beyond the external view. The inner life of her figures remains hidden from us, as they are not psychologized, but definitely inhabit bodies about which not only statements are made, but that consciously produce statements.

Manuela Ammer (8)

During the last twenty years, Margit Palme has increasingly devoted herself to describing the challenges and problems of women. These speak confidently about their difficult situations. However, they do not assume the role of victims, but instead take action.

Brigitte Reutner-Doneus (9)

Palme's bound bodies, her compositionally constrained figures, but also an overall "lack of freedom of expression" not only expose gendered exclusions, but also implicitly attack those ideologies that have placed art in the service of freedom and democracy since the Second World War, while ignoring fundamental structures of power and violence.

Ulrike Müller (10)

Palme's women do not allow themselves to be put on display. They take care of their own happiness in life, are autonomous and independent. Not only with guns in their hands do they know how to defend themselves and courageously represent their own positions.

Brigitte Reutner-Doneus (11)

Description of the process of creating an aquatint etching from the artist's perspective

How I work

First there is the idea, then I make a pencil sketch and afterwards I think about how this design can be realised. In my colour etchings / aquatints, I am primarily concerned with the balance of the form, the structure of the picture surface and the arrangement of the colour plates.

The aquatint is an etching. It involves an old intaglio technique that is rarely used today, as it is very material and time consuming, especially if you work with colour, as I do. I normally utilise two to three and sometimes up to five zinc plates per etching. A separate zinc plate is required for each colour that appears in the final work. The individual plates need not be of the same size. On the contrary and one of my specialties is working with plates of different sizes and formats. In the past, I used small and very small plates for reasons of economy, but now I employ them deliberately for reasons of composition. Sometimes I put them together like a puzzle, or I place a colour or plate in a specific position in the image.

The etching technique involves the following. Firstly come the zinc plates, which are 0.5 to 0.8 mm thick and can only be used once. These have to be polished and degreased after which, the initial phase of drawing on the plate begins. In total, each plate requires at least two or three drawing phases and an equal number of etching procedures.

The initial phase of the drawing always corresponds to the lightest tone of the respective colour. I draw with a brush and sugar water and then cover the entire plate with asphalt varnish. Once the varnish has dried, I brush the plate in a warm water bath. Where the sugar water lies under the asphalt varnish, the coating peels off. Conversely, all of the areas to which the asphalt varnish continues to adhere are subsequently protected from the acid.

I now start the preparations for the etching with the application of rosin dust to the plate. The rosin is shaken up in a separate dust box and spread as a fine layer over the entire plate. It can only become effective where the zinc plate is not covered by asphalt varnish. If I wish to achieve a coarser grain when printing, I apply the rosin dust by hand with a wad of cotton wool. As in this case the dust grains are not distributed quite so finely, the points that do not take on any colour during printing are larger.

This rosin dust is then burned into the plate. I hold the zinc plate over a hotplate, which melts the dust particles and bonds them to the surface. I then mix nitric acid with water in a tub and swirl the plate back and forth in what is the etching process. If I am seeking to achieve a lighter colour shade, I can only etch for a short time. Conversely, if I want a darker shade, I have to etch for longer, i.e. deeper.

Once the etching procedure is concluded, I first wash the plate with water and then with nitro thinner. This not only dissolves the asphalt varnish, but also the burnt-in grain. Where the etch has penetrated the metal plate, the surface is roughened.

This is the procedure for the first and lightest shade of a colour. For each additional shade I then have to repeat the process described above on the same plate. This applies equally for each additional colour or plate. Finally, the edges of the plates are smoothed with a file to prevent the sharp metal from cutting the paper during printing.

I print my aquatints on copperplate board. This is stored for one to two days between weighted down layers of damp rotary paper. High-quality prints are only guaranteed if the board is damp and soft. I apply the copper printing ink to the zinc plate with a firm cloth pad. I do this over a hotplate, because in order to ensure that the ink penetrates into every recess, both the printing plate and the ink need to be warm.

Once cooled, the excess ink is wiped off with a cloth until it only adheres where it should, namely in the etched recesses.

I then start printing on my hand press. I place the plate face down on the printing table, with the damp copperplate board and one or two felt pads on top. I use the hand crank to set the whole thing in motion between the two heavy metal rollers. The strong pressure on the flexible felt presses the ink into the recesses of the plate and hence onto the board.

During the remaining printing process, both the second and each subsequent inked plate are placed precisely onto the board, which has already been printed with one colour. This demands millimetre accuracy and hence the utmost precision. Once the printing process is complete, the individual prints are placed between boards, pressed and dried.

I only make a few prints of each of my colour etchings / aquatints, totalling a maximum of three to eight. Even smaller editions would not justify the amount of work involved.

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Margit Palme, 2023
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