

Karl Prantl

SCULPTOR 1923–2010

Karl Prantl was born on the 5th of November, 1923, in Pötttsching, Austria, in the province of Burgenland as the elder son of Georg Prantl (1895–1963), civil servant, and his wife Anna, née Noss (1898–1979). His maternal grandfather was a farmer and baker in Pötttsching. His father was first a Hungarian civil servant, then an Austrian one (Burgenland became part of the newly established Republic of Austria in 1921). In this time of political upheaval and radicalization the family sought stability in the fixed structures of the Roman Catholic Church.

1930–39 Attends primary and secondary schools. From the age of 12 he was at boarding school in Eisenstadt. During school trips he got to know the hill and stone quarry in St. Margarethen.

1939–45 After the annexation of Austria to the German Reich, Karl Prantl is recruited into the Reich Labour Service and finally into the armed forces. In the Second World War he served as a soldier in Greece and in the Balkans.

1946–52 Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (class of Albert Paris Gütersloh and life drawing with Herbert Boeckl). He completes his studies and is awarded a Diploma in Painting.

1950 Attempts to run a farm together with students of the “Cura Circle” (Father Alfred Focke) failed. Prantl moves back to Pötttsching. The first sculptures of wood and stone come into being in the courtyard of the family home.

1953–1955 Karl Prantl lives and works in a self-constructed hut in the Orangery of the park of the Esterhazy Palace in Eisenstadt. (Due to an agreement with the Russian occupying forces, the Orangery was at the disposal of Burgenland’s Künstlerbund – Association

of Artists – as a workshop and exhibition hall until 1955).

1955 First solo exhibition at the Neue Galerie Linz/ Wolfgang-Gurlitt-Museum.

1956 He is awarded a stipend by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education and Art to go to Rome. A trip to Greece follows.

1957 He marries the artist Uta Peyrer.

1957–58 During the winter small sculptures in plaster of Paris are created which were later cast in bronze.

1958 Birth of his daughter, Katharina. First studio in the so-called Stadtbahnbogen (a viaduct, part of the architecture of Otto Wagner’s Vienna suburban railway system, along the Danube Canal). Commission from the Provincial Government of Burgenland for a boundary stone on the road from Vienna to Budapest (Hungarian rising of 1956). While working on the boundary stone in the stone quarry at St. Margarethen, Karl Prantl underwent the experience that sculptures are determined by other factors and influences out in the open than they are in a closed room.

1959 This experience led to the foundation of the first “Symposion Europäischer Bildhauer” (Symposium of European Sculptors) which he organized together with Friedrich Czargan and Heinrich Deutsch. After this Prantl spends his winters preparing the symposia which are held annually (a working group of 10–15 sculptors over a period of two to three months, which were increasingly held internationally in stone quarries, steel works, urban spaces and in exemplary landscapes). Subsequently Karl Prantl attended 35 symposia in Europe, America and Asia. An additional in-

novation was moving the passion plays, which had been held in the village of St. Margarethen since 1926 to the stone quarry and staging them there in a new natural setting every five years.

1960 Birth of his son, Sebastian.

1961–62 Karl Prantl travels to Berlin with his family in order to be active as the initiator of the symposium there that had been organized spontaneously after the building of the Berlin Wall (13th August 1961). The message was to have an inter-connecting, human message from the sculptors from East and West set against the divisive wall of violence. The sculptors worked near the wall and carving their stone sculpture on the Platz der Republik. (Currently near the Federal Chancellery). The German Critics' Prize of 1962 (in the category of the visual arts) was awarded to the symposium and for Karl Prantl's special achievement.

1962 Attends the symposium "Form in Space", Negev desert, Israel.

1965 Moved into the studio in Vienna's Prater (a former exhibition building from the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873). Re-organization of the symposia with the help of Christa Hauer-Frumann/Galerie im Griechenbeisl in Vienna.

1967 First trip to the USA for the opening of the solo exhibition at the Staempfli Gallery/New York. He receives two commissions from the Roman Catholic Church to design the interiors – the Church of the Holy Cross at Langholzfeld/Linz (architect Ernst Hiesmayer), the parish church in Wernstein near Schärding (altar, tabernacle, baptismal font and the tomb of Alfred Kubin).

1968 He is awarded the Prize of the City of Vienna for Sculpture. Trip to the USA (with his family) to New York and to the Proctor Symposium in Vermont.

1969–1970 Sojourn to Japan on the occasion of the Steel Symposium as part of Expo '69 in Osaka.

1970 Resigned as Chairman of the Association "Symposium of European Sculptors, St. Margarethen" in protest of the lack of support from Austria's arts administration.

1972 Easter trip by sculptors from St. Margarethen to Constantin Brancusi's "Table of

Silence" in Tirgu Jiu, Romania. The reason for the meeting between sculptors from East and West was to reorient the concept of the symposium. The symposium was to devote itself increasingly to the challenges of urban space. Redesigning the Stephansplatz in Vienna while the metro was being constructed was the goal of an extensive research assignment given to the symposium by St. Margarethen. The sculptors were to work on tombstone material of the City of Vienna (precious, valuable granite from the turn of the 19th/20th century) and lay them in a certain conceptual arrangement in the ground around the cathedral. The sweeping international dimension of the venture finally failed in 1976 due to the authorities and to the architects and colleagues who oversaw it.

1973 Commission from the Patrick Lannan Foundation, Palm Beach, Florida, USA, for the "Stones for Nikolaus Kopernikus".

1974 Attended the "8th International Sculpture Conference" in Lawrence, Kansas at the invitation of the University of Kansas.

1976 Beginning of the co-operation with the gallery and the publishing company "Erker", St. Gallen, Switzerland.

1977–78 longer sojourn with the family in New York (loft in Great Jones Street in Noho) and New Mexico.

1979 The commission to create a stone for the meditation room of the international centre of the United Nations City in Vienna is realized. Resigns from the association "Symposium of European Sculptors" in St. Margarethen.

1978 onwards, Pötsching is his main place of residence again.

1980 Sojourn in India, attends the International Sculptors' Symposium at the University of the Punjab, Patiala, India. Trip to the USA, where he attended the "11th International Sculpture Conference" in Washington.

1981–85 During the summer months works on sculpture (Brazilian granite) in Richisau, Switzerland on behalf of the Kamm Foundation, Zug.

1984 Commission for the interior of the Church of St. Immaculata in Hünfeld-Sargenzell, Germany.

1984–91 Setting up of large sculptures in the countryside, Estate/Collection Lenz Schönberg, Tyrol.

1986 He represents Austria at the Biennale in Venice.

1986 onwards Collection and setting up his large sculptures at Pöttschinger Feld.

1988 Friedrich Cerha dedicates “Monumentum”, a composition for orchestra, to Karl Prantl. It receives its world premiere at the Salzburg Festival in 1989.

1989 Karl Prantl joins the association “Symposium of European Sculptors, St. Margarethen” again. Friedericke Mayröcker writes the poem “Aus einem Stein entsprungen – aus einem Verwandtschaftshimmel” commissioned by Erker publishing house, St. Gallen, Switzerland.

1990 Construction of the studio at Pöttschinger Feld (architect Ernst Hießmayer). It was Karl Prantl’s idea to turn the cross-shaped barn near Rechnitz in Burgenland, which was the site of a massacre of Jews in 1945 into a memorial. Using donations – collected with the assistance of Marietta Torberg – the Verein Symposion Europäischer Bildhauer, St. Margarethen purchased the site with the abandoned building and renovated it. A sculpture by the Israeli sculptor Kosso Eloul, (which was created in 1961 as part of the Symposium at St. Margarethen) was set up on the site. In 1993 the area was given to the Israeli religious community.

1991 The “Nürnberger Kreuzweg” (Nuremberg Stations of the Cross) consisting of 14 slabs from the Great Road at the Nazi party

rally grounds in Nuremberg (exhibited in Graz, Warsaw and Vienna).

1993 Designs “Klangsäule” (Soundcolumn), a stele out of stainless steel (from the illegal manufacture of weapons at the Böhler works in Kapfenberg) for the Traisen Pavilion in St. Pölten for the choreography “Klangsäule”, a production by Tanz Atelier Wien/Sebastian Prantl. (Friedrich Cerha composes “Ein Stück für K” for this occasion.)

1994 Creates a stone altar for the Leechkirche in Graz. Solo annual exhibition in the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, England, which subsequently is shown for another year in the park of Ambras Castle near Innsbruck.

1995 The “Nürnberger Kreuzweg “ is installed at its definitive site at the Church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg, Germany.

2002 Re-positioning of the “Grenzstein” (boundary stone) at Mitterberg near Pöttsching, close to the former border of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (18 sculptures from the Symposium Europäischer Bildhauer, St. Margarethen were re-positioned in the landscape near the “Grenzstein” around Pöttsching).

2003 The film »Die Steinspur« is shot by the filmmaker Robert Neumüller.

2006/07 Sparda-Bank-Preis for special achievements in the field of art in public spaces, Mainz, Germany.

2009 Karl Prantl is awarded the Grand Austrian State Prize.

Karl Prantl passes away on 8th October 2010 in Pöttsching.