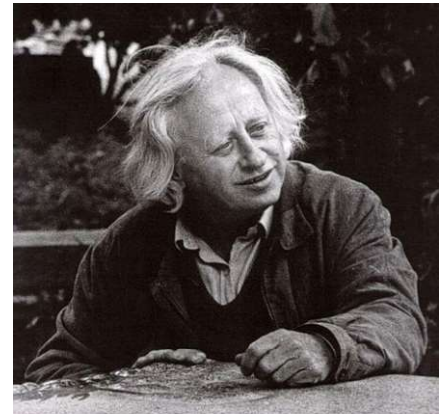


TRANSART WORKS

Karl Prantl Archive



In the implementation and development of the KARL PRANTL ARCHIVE, the focus continues to be on three phases of his multi-layered artistic heritage:

- the globally networked SCULPTOR SYMPOSIUM MOVEMENT - starting out in St. Margarethen in 1959 and its significance towards other internationally initiated symposia activities. Their impact in the perception of public space as 'SOCIAL SCULPTURE' is the subject of ongoing specific discourse fostering new playing fields.
- KARL PRANTL's artistic oeuvre in regard to historically significant urban spaces (Project Nuremberg, Expo Osaka and the unrealized S. Steven Plaza Project in Vienna) are significant features and contributions in the evolution of public space configuration and thus increasingly relevant in modern art history.
- The art-historical reception of KARL PRANTL's legacy regarding interface of imaginative and real border ('Iron Curtain') and their aesthetic demands in the search for abstraction (an abstract formal language regarding anarchic work processes are fundamental components of the international sculpture symposium movement to this day) will be subjected to an ongoing discourse.

In this interface the cooperation with art historians and theorists such as Manfred Bauschulte, Miroslava Hajek, Markus Kristan, Galit Noga-Banai and others additional points of references are shown in text form within a wider research agenda, thus well-known contributions are sharpened and contextualized within a new framework:

'EXPERIMENT ON DENSITY - ON THE STONE ART OF KARL PRANTL' a text by Manfred Bauschulte enhances and underpins the symposium movement since the 1960s as a unique emancipation of modern sculpture framing land art and urban contexts anew. Addressing the subject matter as a concept that is not at all completed in time and space, he reconnects various topics, places and initiatives foregrounding the current dissatisfactory status quo of the Art- and Nature Sanctuary of St. Margarethen. (Yes, unfortunately, it is indeed ongoingly torpedoed and manipulated art-historically by the complex playing fields on site under the rule of the Esterhazy-Holding).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND – by Manfred Bauschulte

Granite slabs of the 'Large Nazi Parade Road' in Nuremberg repositioned for the 'Akademisches Gymnasium' in Vienna – in memory of the expelled academic staff of the institute in 1938



The 'Boundary Stone' at Mitterberg near Pöttsching - the sculpture with which it all began...

It is hard to imagine the far-reaching consequences of the suppression of the uprising in Hungary by the Soviet army in 1956, the reactions it provoked. For Karl Prantl from Burgenland, who had been in contact with the Hungarian population from childhood, the "Iron Curtain" that was to run through his homeland meant a disaster that provoked his determined resistance. With financial support from the provincial government of Burgenland, he created a boundary stone in the quarry of St. Margarethen in the years 1957-58, which was erected in 1960 on the federal highway 10 at the Austro-Hungarian border crossing Nickelsdorf-Hegyeshalom: *"A memorial for intellectual freedom"*.

During the uprising of 1956, the border town had become an international hub for aid and escape operations. For the sculptor, years of protest against the "Cold War" and the construction of the Wall began. The boundary stone is 2.60 meters high, 2.20 meters wide and 70 centimeters deep. The design shows a very dynamic view side. In contrast, the back looks like a flat, perforated block. Of course, when it was erected in 1960, the front was turned towards the Hungarian border and the "Iron Curtain" as a protest view.

After the fall of the Wall, which took place in a dramatic way in the summer of 1989 in the same section of the border section of the Austrian-Hungarian border, the stone found a place on the Mitterberg in the fields above the village of Pötttsching. Here he recalls the Habsburg-Hungarian border as it existed until 1918, until the end of the First World War. Today, the boundary stone turns its face towards the village and turns its back on Wiener Neustadt.

Karl Prantl follows the design guidelines in dealing with blocks and their structure. In the construction of the "boundary stone", he is particularly interested in two functions that reveal their own design language: the relationship between the load and load-bearing capacity of the blocks and the views through the stone. A game of wild shifting of forces takes place here, in which the reflected impulses emanate from the left side. By far, the columns between the left and right halves of the block are the most prominent. There are three of them. The right block has only a narrow view. The left one, on the other hand, allows for two gaps. In addition, the block allows a view into the cuboid from the very outside. On the Pötttschinger Hill, the dynamics of the sculpture come into play because the approach and walking through it allow many views from above and below.



Granite Steles (1986) for the Josef Hoffmann Pavilion in Venice

Since the late 1950s, Karl Prantl has strived to use his stones to create places of condensed presence that are oriented towards political resistance, existential transformations and historical testimonies. The sculptor never makes a direct appeal to the viewer. He is not characterized by any pathos or pedagogy. His

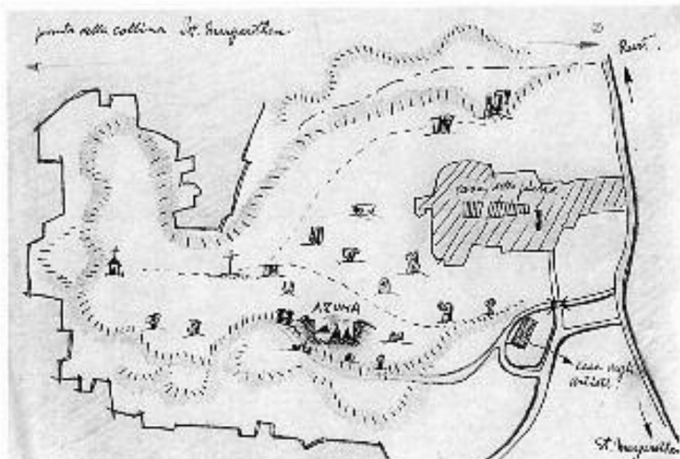
works are based solely on attention and restraint, so they are not obvious at first glance. It almost seems as if the modesty and humility that the sculptor demands towards the stones should apply in the same way to the relationship of the viewer to stone art. Empathy and patience are required. In the face of a conceptual art that makes anything and everything an object, in the face of an art market that mercilessly aims at exploitation, Karl Prantl's stone art demands a return to the tangible present. It requires the willingness to perceive the things that surround us and to feel them as they are, so that we can recognize who we are.

The sculptor provokes an encounter with the stone that establishes vital references to the world. It shows human dimensions and at the same time goes beyond them. It aims at cosmic effectiveness because the human lifespans are so transient. But because we participate in world events through our work and imagination, stone art reflects on the places of the condensed present. The locations demonstrate how a living figure grows out of the stone, overcoming heaviness. They bring to light what was once alive and how it is present. In this way, what ceases to be present can become future. Thus, the stones carry with them a duration that humans need.

The Sculpture Landscape of St. Margarethen in Burgenland

*"This is open land, Pannonia, the stones change the landscape and the landscape changes the stones."
(Karl Prantl)*

St. Margarethen in Burgenland, which lies on the border between Austria and Hungary, is the place from which Karl Prantl's work began, with its quarry from the Roman era and building material source of the city of Vienna. From here, the idea of the sculpture symposia has gone around the world since 1959. Despite initial rejection, the idea of "art in public space" was able to gain widespread recognition in East and West and became an integral part of urban life. In many places around the world there are sculpture parks and paths today, without it even being known where the idea comes from and how great the resistance to its dissemination was at the beginning. On the hill of St. Margarethen, more than 150 sculptures were created in decades of work. Its charisma was enhanced by the scenic interplay of the hill with Lake Neusiedl. Many stones do not let you go once you have become familiar with them.



Skizze: Kenjiro Azuma

I have chosen three works from the sculpture landscape to describe them in more detail. The "Stone for Joseph Matthias Hauer" by Karl Prantl is the focus. Curiously, you head for it if you have already been there. Visible from afar, it is enthroned on the hill. Its place is a stone carpet, at the foot of which Lake Neusiedl looms in the distance in the haze. An introductory digression deals with Kenjiro Azuma's "Rock Garden", which is as hidden as it is

mysterious. I also pay some attention to the "Japanese Line". The "River without Water", the largest sculpture in St. Margarethen, goes back to the initiative of Makoto Fujiwara and is a collective work of Japanese sculptors. It has remained unfinished and is no longer accessible in all sections. Like the "Stone for Josef Matthias Hauer", the sculptures of the Japanese sculptors have blended genuinely into the hilly landscape. Every encounter with them opens up surprising perspectives.

The utopia of the symposia of St. Margarethen was based on the work in the quarry and in the open-air landscape. An event house, which was built between 1962-1968 according to plans by the Austrian architect Johann Georg Gsteu (1927-2013) at the foot of the hill, was able to put the ideas of the symposium into practice. Using a grid, Gsteu designed an elongated building that is characterized by strong contrasts: masonry with large sandstone blocks, narrow window openings and a mighty reinforced concrete construction as a flat roof. The house (first builder's prize to Karl Prantl in 1968) provides rooms in which artists could spend the night, shower, cook, come together and discuss. The sculptor's utopia was transferred to a meeting place that has retained its aura for visitors. The house, which ideally combines work and concentration, is reminiscent of a Zen or monastic monastery. To this day, the sculpture park and the sculpture house are neither supported by public institutions in Burgenland and Austria nor appreciated accordingly by the international art world. The permanent existence is still not guaranteed. There is hardly a comparable place where art and landscape enter into such an intensive alliance and where people can participate in it as informally as in St. Margarethen. Thus, this chapter is a plea for the preservation of the sculpture landscape. Their fragile status was to change fundamentally in the foreseeable future. An interjection: What the hell is for! – Do we have European cultural funding if it is not able to serve the preservation of such a unique artistic landscape?

It is no exaggeration to compare the hill of St. Margarethen with the garden of Bomarzo from the late Renaissance. Although the gardens were created under completely different auspices and there are centuries between them, there are some overlaps. What is not to be wished for St. Margarethen is the time of collective oblivion, in which the art landscape on the border of Lazio



and Umbria slumbered because no one was interested in it. The mythological ensemble of figures in the "Sacred Forest" ("sacro bosco") of Bomarzo is the creation of the elitist understanding of art of the builder Vicino Orsini. According to his plans, architects and painters laid out the park in 30 years of work between 1552 and 1585. The prince wanted to erect a monument to his wife Julia, who died at an early age.

The Sculptors' House

The sculptures of St. Margarethen are works created by people of different nations and professions during the paralyzing times of the "Cold War". For weeks and months, sculptors from East and West came together to demonstratively overcome the barriers and borders that separated them through their work. Strengthened by communal impulses, they returned to their places of activity on both sides of the "Iron Curtain". On site, the works that were created under the banner of understanding were left behind and stimulated dialogue. The formal language testifies to a wide spectrum of emotions, from instability to longing to fragility. Where the sculptures on the hill of St. Margarethen articulate vulnerable attitudes, Vicino Orsini gave mythological traits to the interplay of reality and nature in the forest near Bomarzo. The realistic as well as the mythological design is as stimulating as it is legitimate. They are necessary where consumption and virtuality push themselves to the fore, where cultural life threatens to become shallow and dull.

Heaven, Earth and Man

It was only on my second or third visit to St. Margarethen that I discovered the rock garden "*Cielo, terra e uomo*" (*Heaven, Earth and Man*) by Kenjiro Azuma. It nestles hidden in the slope below the contour line, where the view opens up to the west. In spring and summer, dense green foliage stretches over the depression in which it lies. The cones on the bottom can only be seen from favorable angles from above or to the side. In autumn and winter, the oaks in the depression are swept bare by the leaves, but the three stones that have been placed around them are still easy to miss because they have adapted to the grey colour of the surrounding walls. How Kengiro Azuma worked the terrain, the rock walls and descents become apparent when you descend into the depression and explore it. For the descent, the sculptor has created steps, but he has also carved mysterious signs into the rocks that are difficult to decipher. The immediately recognizable starting point for the design is formed by the three oaks in the middle, which spear out as if from a root and dominate the lowland with their growth. They are in line with a fourth oak tree at the edge. Kengiro Azuma has grouped three cones of sand-lime stone around the trees, creating a rock garden, a natural "amphitheatre in miniature". On the basis of numerous designs, the sculpture was created during the symposium of 1971, and thirty years later a photo book provides information about the motives of the meticulous design and orientation.



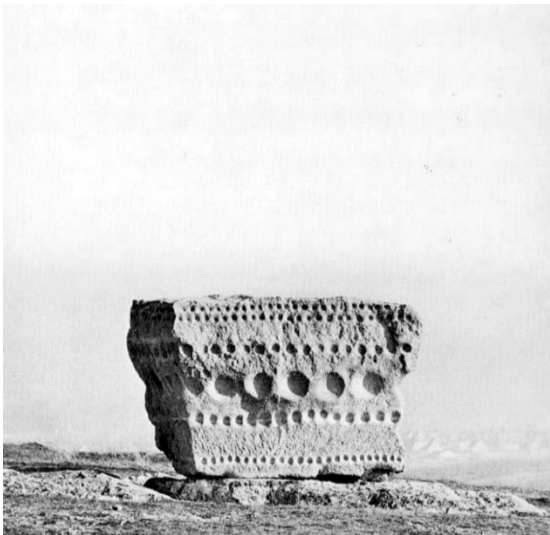
The "amphitheatre in miniature" is located six metres below the contour line and has an almost square layout. It has a length of 7.50 meters and a width of 7.40 meters. The width includes the narrow incision to the west, which provides a view of Burgenland. At the beginning of his work, the sculptor had to turn to the terrain. He removed bushes and undergrowth and straightened out unevenness. With the help of spades, hoes and other tools, he leveled the area on which the accurately hewn

cones would find space and visitors would walk around. The intention of the preparatory work was to set points of reference. Based on the designs, he aligned the square like a compass so that it is determined by the cardinal directions and the relationship of the earth to the sky. The cones, like trees and visitors, occupy a position below the level of the hill. The system provides them with orientation.

In meticulous designs, Kenjiro Azuma circles the positions of the people as well as the trees and cones in the rock garden, both from below and from above. While the lower view is directed at light, shadow and the position of the sun, the supervisor determines the exact proportions. As if on the drawing board, the sculptor determines the coordinates of the square, the positions of the objects and the exact proportions. The coordinates are intended to depict the intertwining of earth and sky that those present discover in the rock garden. People who dive into the depression find an order that is played out down to the smallest detail, which makes it possible to occupy a place between earth and sky. Beyond proportions and positions, the artist sketches the shapes and movements of the stones. The first circumferential cone has the size of 1.70 meters, the second pointed stone measures 1.48 meters and the small flat one is only 1.28 meters high. At the end, he composes a triangle from the cones, in which they lie on an equal footing and refer to each other. Of course, the existing trees are integrated into their reference system. In statements about his artistic work, Kenjiro Azuma speaks of three principles that guide them. In this case, these are the earth, which in place of power and self-destruction is replaced by a substantial image of man. He wants to reach the indeterminate and invisible part of man, to address his soul. The portrayal of the "Mu" is a way for him to free himself from the threat and terror that dominate him. Through them, he wants to regain courage and gain confidence in the mystery of life. Since 1985 – 40 years after the end of the 20th World War – Azuma has begun to use the "Yu", the Zen Buddhist sign for affirmation and being, as a numbering of his works instead of the "Mu" sign.

Kenjiro Azuma's rock garden does not remain under the spell of a Zen Buddhist art religion, as many interpreters invoke it. Rather, their religious contents are broken. The sculpture is characterized by polarities: war and peace, East and West, heaven and earth, emptiness and abundance. It shimmers in the interplay of the forces of trees and rocks, rain and sun, wind and weather. Refuge is found by the visitor whose imagination (or soul) is capable of perceiving how formlessness is inherent in the play of forces. Despite the destruction and suffering in the world, a lively attitude can be adopted. The empty as well as open, "free" space for such an attitude can be discovered in man and in nature.

Between earth and heaven, man learns to orient himself when he is ready. *"Art is help"* – Kenjiro Azuma has set Karl Prantl's maxim as the motto of his book about the rock garden. *"Art is orientation"* is the motto of his sculpture. With its vagueness, it is aimed at the visitors. He formulates the demand as discreetly as quietly: *"Turn within yourself when you enter the garden of stones and move in it!"* The postulate only becomes audible when one has dealt intensively with the sculpture. Kenjiro Azuma, the border crosser between East and West, created a masterpiece of modern stone art. It can be found in the landscape garden of St. Margarethen. It doesn't move from the spot. The traveller has to move if he wants to enter into conversation with the sculpture. It has become a part of the world in which we live.



Stone for Josef Matthias Hauer

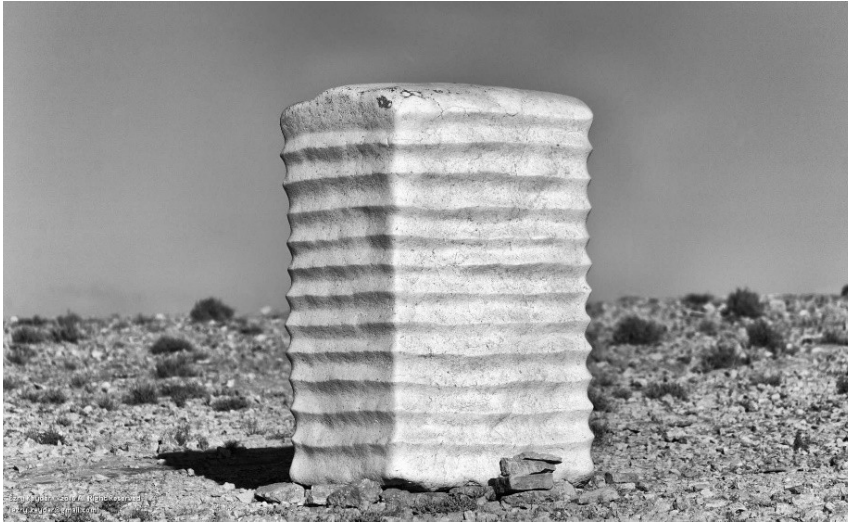
The "Stone for Josef Matthias Hauer" by KARL PRANTL was created between 1964 and 1966. During this period, there was a drastic change in the symposium at St. Margarethen. There was a lack of space in the quarry. After the previous events (since 1959), work space for the sculptors and space for the sculptures had become scarce. So, the artists decided to move to the hill to work together. It offered the advantage that they were free to choose their places for work. Finally, sculptures were visible from afar and became part of the landscape. Accordingly, Karl Prantl looked for a wave-shaped stone carpet under the open sky, which is 23 steps long and 10 steps wide. On top of the rock

formation, he places a block of limestone measuring 1.90 meters (height) by 2.10 meters (width) by 2.20 meters (depth) to work on it. At first glance, the shape of the stone block cannot be interpreted. It eludes simple understanding. Viewers compare it to an altar or a capital. This is true for side views, but not for the whole stone. He transforms from time to time when you walk around him, the more intensively you dedicate yourself to him, the more you look at him. At first glance, the transformations depend on the fact that the stone body is deeper than it is high and wide. In the upper part, it breaks out in all directions, at the same time it tapers downwards. At second glance, the layers of the stone stand out. With the pedestal, reliefs of grown rock layers from all times can be seen. Thus, the structure and layering cause many irritations. The stone appears as terrestrial as it is extraterrestrial. It is not possible to understand it ad hoc.

A brief biographical exploration follows the dedication that is entered in the title of the sculpture: *"Stone for Josef Matthias Hauer"*. Josef Matthias Hauer (1883-1959) came from nearby Wiener Neustadt. His father, who was a prison guard, loved playing the zither. Hauer took over the first name from his music-loving father when he died in 1922. It was not until after the Second World War that the composer was honoured. In his old age, he was awarded the title of professor, the Prize of the City of Vienna (1954) and the Grand Austrian State Prize (1955). He died in the year of the 1st Symposium of St. Margarethen (1959). A portrait of the outsider, who is mentioned in the same breath as Arnold Schoenberg, the creator of atonal music, is drawn by the philosopher of language Ferdinand Ebner (1882-1931). Ebner describes the milieu that the musician roams through in his search for recognition and asserts the influences of the circles around Hermann Bahr and Adolf Loos. He devotes himself to him with sympathy despite the question mark:

"Whether he is, as some claim, a musical charlatan, a constructor, I don't know. But I know that there are bars in his compositions that could not be composed by a charlatan and that are not constructed."

Karl Prantl pays tribute to the composer with a monument. Like Ferdinand Ebner, he is addressed by bars in Hauer's music, but he does not share their rational and depersonalized ethos. The symmetrical hollows running around the "Stone for Josef Matthias Hauer" can be read as symbolic signs based on the musical notation developed by the composer. However, this belongs to the realm of speculation.



Stone for the Glory of God (1963)

Negev Desert,
Israel

Where does landscape begin?

The sociologist and walking scientist Lucius Burckhardt (1925-2003) writes:

"It is not in the nature of things, but in our head that 'the landscape' is to be sought; it is a construct that serves the perception of a society that no longer lives directly from the ground. This perception can have a formative and distorting effect on the outside world when society begins to realize the image it has gained in this way as planning."

Lucius Burckhardt suggests reading landscape as a language and a system of signs, because the consciousness of society is reflected in it. He reminds us that the concept of countryside already had urban origins in antiquity. *"Virgil, for example, discovers countryside as a theme at exactly the time when it was no longer vital for city dwellers to get their hands dirty on the soil, because there were slave armies in Sicily that paid for Rome's grain supply. Even the Romans went so far that they no longer even looked at the landscape. They experienced them all the more intensely and longingly on the poet's paper or in paintings: Roman villas were always built at the most beautiful vantage points, but without external windows. On the inner walls of these houses, on the other hand, the inhabitants enjoyed landscape paintings with shepherds playing flutes by a pond."*

From landscape ideas in antiquity to Renaissance villas and Baroque gardens, Lucius Burckhardt spans the arc to the avant-garde garden art of today, such as the Kassel art shows of the "documenta". In antiquity as well as in modern times, people wrestle with nature (the landscape), i.e. how they can use and exploit it optimally and at the same time enjoy it, i.e. perceive it as beautiful. The social experience of nature in the Neolithic culminates in classical formulas of the beauty of utility and practicality. At the end of the Neolithic Revolution there was the unlimited cultivation and uninhibited utilization of the earth. Stone crushing machines, as I recently saw at work, no longer stop at granite.

Artists work in opposition to the social experience of nature (landscape). They cultivate ideas of staying in Arcadia or claim an uninterested pleasure in nature. The "Sacred Forest" of Bomarzo shows man and nature in the context of mythological transformation arts. The artists' protest is directed against the unconditional exploitation of nature.

Their counter-designs were based on cycles such as the seasons, sowing and harvesting, and the comings and goings of the sexes. Duration and recurrence constitute instances of appeal against smooth functioning. They bring into play motifs of transformation and transience that are necessary to capture the experiences. Since the Renaissance, the revolt of artists has been directed against the logic of productivity and exploitation. Leonardo da Vinci demands that human abilities serve the benefit of the species in order to create a "second nature".

An art action such as that of Joseph Beuys, which was realized at the "8th documenta" (1987), can be used to show current dimensions of the relationship between man and nature. At the beginning of the "7th documenta" (1982), Joseph Beuys stored 7000 basalt stones in a wedge-shaped triangle in front of the Fridericianum in Kassel. At the top of the stone triangle, he planted the first oak tree in March 1982. The campaign entitled *"7000 Oaks: Urban Forestation instead of City Administration"* pursued the goal that donors (of 500 DM) could purchase a basalt and place the block next to an oak tree that was planted in the city of Kassel. Joseph Beuys died on January 23, 1986. In the summer of the following year, the project was completed. The 7000 trees were planted and 7000 stones were placed, which are now part of the cityscape of Kassel. In terms of size, shape and growth, the trees, like the stones, convey an idea of permanence and changeability, independent of bureaucracy and industry. People who take a walk through the city and come across one of the 7000 ensembles may wonder what corresponds to the growth of the trees and the strength of the stones.

At the end of the Neolithic Revolution, artists such as Joseph Beuys and Karl Prantl opened up critical perspectives for the relationship between man and nature-landscape. They motivate us to slow down, to pause, to exercise restraint and to bring the senses into play so as not to act headlessly. They protest against the paralyzing administration as well as against the ruthless exploitation of things and resources!

The Japanese Line

"The Japanese Line" by St. Margarethen is undoubtedly one of the most spectacular landscape sculptures in Europe. It is formed by a channel that runs through the rock formations from the foot of the quarry up to the chapel at the top of the hill. With all its interruptions, the "Japanese line" has a total length of 65.5 meters. The stone canal has a depth of 80 centimetres and a width of 70 centimetres. The most impressive parts of the line are in the quarry. The first part, the so-called "spring", is in his foot. It is the longest piece of the sculpture and measures a total of 15 meters. The second, subsequent part leads 11 metres up the steep wall, which borders directly on the listed so-called "Stephanswand" in the quarry.



This part rising into the sky below stand like a "waterfall" carved in stone. On the plateau, the line, where rocky formations can be found, continues with different lengths. Here, sections have a length of 10 meters, 2 meters, 13 meters, 6 meters and 3.5 meters. They are difficult to recognize because they are overgrown with trees, grass, bushes, mosses and shrubs.



To visit the "waterfall" and "stone spring", visitors have to descend into the quarry. This is no longer possible so easily. In the future, the sculpture was to be freely accessible to all guests. It is an impressive example of modern land art. Anyone who follows the course of the "Japanese line" gets the feeling of witnessing its creation. The initiator of the sculpture is Makoto Fujiwara. The sculptor was born in 1938 in Gifu, Japan, and studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kyoto. In the 1960s, scholarships abroad took him to the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, to Fritz Wotruba.

EXPO OSAKA 1970 - Steel Sculpture by KARL PRANTL

In 1968 he applied for the symposium in the Krastal in Carinthia and thus met Karl Prantl. Back in Japan, he applied in 1969 as an assistant to Karl Prantl at the 1970 Expo Osaka for the major international steel symposium.

Afterwards, Karl Prantl invited him to stay and project during the symposium in Burgenland the following summer (1970). Together with Makio Yamaguchi, his professor of aesthetics, and three fellow students from the Kyoto Academy, Tetsuzo Yamamoto, Takao Hirose and Saturo Shoji, Makoto Fujiwara arrived in St. Margarethen in June 1970 to work on a project. Karl Prantl had finally found a group of sculptors who agreed to tackle a sculpture together. Since 1959, it had been the firm intention of the symposia to work collectively. The result was "individual" works. On site, the group was initially completely unimaginative and at a loss. For days the young sculptors turned high-flying designs back and forth and discarded them as quickly as they had come. As Makoto Fujiwara recounts – with humour – in retrospect, they threatened to "discuss endlessly" until suddenly the idea arose from their conversations: they could try to "draw an endless line". True to the utopian gesture of their "endless conversation", they could try to "stretch an endless line around the entire globe".

In this specific case, the globe was of course the hill and quarry of St. Margarethen. The sculptors wanted to apply the idea of "the endless line" to the terrain in space and time with their work. This could only succeed – as Makoto Fujiwara went on to say – because once the work had begun, it was carried out from morning to night for two and a half months. They found their way into a specific rhythm, which the participants adhered to with unrelenting discipline. The start was at 6 o'clock in the morning. At 8 o'clock breakfast was taken, then work continued until noon. At that time there was a break to eat and drink, and so on.

The sculptor's house, which Karl Prantl had kept free for the group, formed an ideal base so that they could work their way into a real frenzy from June to the end of August 1970. While studying the nature of the terrain and in the course of the work, it soon became clear to those involved – as Makoto Fujiwara admits with over 40 years of distance and subtlety and humour – "that the endless line could only be a broken line".

A River without Water

The landscape sculpture of the Japanese Sisyphian workers could easily be transformed from an endless to a broken line. In this context, Makoto Fujiwara told the following story: One day – in the summer of 1971 – the Japanese ambassador arrived from Vienna to congratulate the sculptors on their work in the quarry of St. Margarethen. The representative of his country was an expert in calligraphy. When they presented the "Japanese line" to the scholar, which had already become "a broken line" at that time, he would have given the sculpture an appropriate designation from the repertoire of his own discipline in no time at all. It reads: *"A river without water – the purpose of interrupting is to continue"*. To this day, the landscape sculpture has retained this apt title.

I have presented three works of art from the sculpture landscape of St. Margarethen, which can be found in the open area and can be walked on. In the descriptions, I circle around the question of their firmness without being able to answer it definitively. Instead, the questions of firmness slip out of my hands until the end. The sculpture "River without Water" is proof of the fact that there is no answer to a final form of solidity. Almost everything is completely different. But I don't want to end with a question mark, but at the end I want to make a reference to the stone art of Karl Prantl. Not only the sculptures of Kengiro Azuma and those of Makoto Fujiwara's group can be traced back to his initiative. His work is also in dialogue with these and other sculptures.

Karl Prantl describes the situation of the sculptures of St. Margarethen in context:

"The stones should remain where they were created and be there for all people. It's different from the museums: the encounter with such a stone in the landscape has a different experience: you also experience the tree, the grass, the moss, the clouds. I see, albeit in my own way, that man should participate in the whole of creation, that he should feel responsible for everything that surrounds him. Art means help, and the equation of art and help is the fulfilment of what my work has brought during the symposia. I didn't really suspect this help at the time, but I certainly felt it, and that's probably why I made the effort to get this European symposium off the ground. We, the sculptors, were in a need of like-minded people at that time, which was of a spiritual and material nature. No longer too young, we lacked concrete tasks. We were also of the opinion that man had to return to the humane. Art can fulfil part of this task. This should not only be done with words, but also in fact. In the form of a stone, for example, which means resistance. Resistance as an expression of our lethargic society. For us sculptors, the stone was a vehicle for mutual communication, also towards the outside world. The spiritual and humane need is global, i.e. to be related to the whole world."

What can be done about the global emergency? After two world wars and civil wars in many parts of the world, the threat has become universal that people will lose their place, their homes and their livelihoods. The atomic bomb and the dangers of nuclear energy have potentiated the means of destruction. Karl Prantl tested resistance during the Cold War and called for cooperation between creative forces in East and West. At St. Margarethen, something of reality has become something that he had in mind. In the face of global hardships, his stone art is an exemplary attempt at strength. It speaks of human existence under a free, finite sky.

The sculptures by Karl Prantl, Kenjiro Azuma and the friends around Makoto Fujiwara all revolve around existential motifs. The first motive is that people all over the world are called to community. It is important to peacefully establish and maintain common ground. In this way, the stones involve us in an exchange with questions of everyday life: Where do we stand? What do we need? What do we want? Where do we want to go? Thanks to the abstract sculptures, we encounter the ambiguities of preservation and destruction, change and permanence. Through them we discover the dynamics of inside and outside, finite and infinite. The unusual perspectives of the Japanese sculptors surprise us. They allow for a change of perspective and show how limited certainties are. We become part of a West-East dialogue. A conversation begins between finite points of view and the cloudy sky over the landscape.

At the centre of the game of West-Eastern forces is the "Stone for Josef Matthias Hauer". He rejects from the outset ideas of beauty and perfection as we are accustomed to them. In its unidirectionality, disorderedness and blurring lie qualities that embody a creative capacity. The conclusions that can be drawn are: The creative is in flux. It is provisional and open to the intrusion of external forces. Resistance to threat and destruction is temporary and incomplete. A final verdict is not possible under finite conditions. The strength of the stone reflects the qualities of living work under humane conditions. Accordingly, the "Japanese Line" formulates the utopian existential: even where the flow is interrupted, it continues.

Manfred Bauschulte



Manfred Bauschulte, born in 1956 in Ibbenbüren (Westphalia), lives and works in Cologne and Bardüttingdorf. After studying theology, sociology, philosophy, literature and religious studies in Bethel, Bielefeld and Berlin, he worked as an author and translator. After years of teaching at the Ruhr University Bochum, he has been working as a freelancer again (since 2010) and publishes essays on literature as well as literary and religious studies