

Norbert Prangenberg

Drawing, painting and sculpture flow together in various ways in Norbert Prangenberg's work. On account of his ceramic figures, he was a pioneer, who brought ceramics back into fine art in the 1980s.

Drawing is the starting point of his work; simple shapes to be seen in his drawings are areas left blank inside the black ground, sometimes not actually drawn, but arising as cut-outs in the paper. This might appear gauche, and yet is executed with dream-like certainty. In his paintings, Prangenberg favoured watercolours, which he used to create a transparent ground, to oil paints. He proceeded to work with pastel crayons, crouching on the floor, so that the orientation of the forms, surrounded by clusters of looping lines, remained open. The immaterial shine of the pigments produces a strangely hovering surface.

In his ceramics, Prangenberg also went in search of simple forms with nothing premeditated or contrived about them. He placed round floral elements unfurling rather like a fan at an angle to the rings of clay. They attract attention to the surfaces, both inside and out. Not only the external surfaces are glazed, but often the interior as well, acting to guide the eye towards it and light up this space.

The surfaces of the recumbent figures are covered in a coloured glaze, cracks and punctuations, appearing like a membrane mediating between outside and inside. A group of such figures lying on the grass around the Skulpturenhalle do not propose any correspondence between their organic shapes and natural forms, being beholden only to themselves and thus just as foreign in a natural as in an architectural setting.

In his final years, Prangenberg turned to making small sketchy ceramic works – you can identify hints of objects, figures and landscapes. In contrast, the highly colourful small-format oils capture a figurative image in the painting, scenes with human figures and animals. Inside his chaotic colour scheme, Prangenberg conjured up an intimate end game.

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