

## Squintmagazin Interview

### 1) Let's start with 'Who you are' Can you briefly tell us about your life?

I am the mother of two adult children and live with my husband in an old wooden house from the 1970s on the outskirts of Vienna, right in the Vienna Woods.

I really love living close to nature while still having the opportunity to be in Vienna quickly. I adore this vibrant yet morbid city and its people. Additionally, there is a wide range of contemporary dance and art exhibitions, both of which are very important to me. As a child, I moved around a lot with my parents. Finally, I feel like I have arrived home. This is where I belong.

### 2) Can you share how your early life and upbringing influenced your decision to pursue a career in design and art?

As a child, I loved to draw a lot. Drawing helped me to switch off and be completely in my own world.

Due to the many relocations, I had to start over again and again. I had a tic and sleep disturbances, was shy, and always clung to my mother. But my parents' world was different from mine. Still, I was compliant and well-behaved. Inside me, something was waiting to be freed, to have the opportunity to be myself and let my emotions flow freely. During puberty, it finally came to a head. I had constant struggles with my father. I was supposed to be and act as he envisioned. My wish was to break free, to lead my own free life, but as long as "I was still sitting at his table," that was not possible.

In high school, I took an advanced art course. That was my domain; I was recognized there and received praise and acknowledgment. My drawing teacher was a strange sleeping pill, but I was in a class with like-minded people. That felt good and encouraged me. I drew a lot, and eventually, my parents allowed me to take a private drawing course, where I was by far the youngest. I learned a lot there and am still very grateful for it today. My teacher encouraged me to apply to the Academy of Fine Arts. In my parents' eyes, that was not a good idea because they feared I might slip into the bohemian lifestyle. Nevertheless, I secretly applied—for painting.

However, a professor of graphic design liked my portfolio. So, I ended up in that field, even though I actually wanted to study painting. At first, I continued to paint—just for myself. Later, I gradually turned more towards graphic design. It was much easier to start my "proper career" there. And my parents were satisfied that I was no longer pursuing a "breadless" job.

- 3) Who have been your most significant artistic influences, and in what ways have they shaped your work?

"After I dropped out of the art academy in Nuremberg and applied to the 'Higher Graphic Federal Teaching and Research Institute, Vienna,' because I wanted to return to Austria, I became a student of the concrete painter Oskar Putz. He supported me, and of course, this had a significant influence on my digital graphic works at the time, which consisted of compositions made of color fields.

I love the works of Francis Bacon. They show me how freely one can interpret and alter faces. For me, his brushstroke is more than genius. He blurs parts that can then stand out even more clearly. He is a magician of transformation. I am also very fascinated by the unusual space in his paintings.

A few years ago, there was an exhibition of Anton Karl Fleck at the Albertina Modern in Vienna. Until then, I was not familiar with this artist, so I was all the more surprised by how much his drawings captivated me. He is an absolute master of reduction, sketching, and manic expression. His wild stroke inspires me to make my own strokes more emotional while keeping the composition in mind."

- 4) Could you walk us through your creative process, from the initial concept to the final piece?

"I have no concept in my artistic work. Just an idea, a spark that suddenly appears. Most of the time, it starts with the desire to draw. Or I see in old abstract paintings of mine a kind of invitation to incorporate figurative elements at a specific point. Then I just start and see what process may develop.

Sometimes I take photos, including many selfies. When I paint/draw myself, the entire artistic process becomes more personal and much more emotional. It has a liberating effect on me. It feels good to finally express feelings that I otherwise wouldn't dare to live out. Additionally, I don't have to consider the feelings of other people.

Often, the painting completely changes during the process and takes on a completely different meaning than the original idea. Then I let the painting grow. But it's not an easy process to paint over an old piece, and yet it feels right... as if it's waiting for it to finally happen. Most of the time, I listen to strange experimental music, but also slow, beautiful music, depending on my mood and what the painting needs at that moment. I feel it in my body when something is "not quite right." My gut feeling decides when a painting is finished."

- 5) What mediums do you prefer to work with, and how do they contribute to the narratives you aim to convey (wie tragen sie zu den Geschichten bei, die Sie vermitteln möchten?)

"I enjoy working on existing image materials. They can be old wooden boards, a scribbled desk pad, or even old abstract paintings of mine that I still feel are unfinished. I like to create collages, finding old snippets or drawings that I can incorporate. Often, it's a wild mix of drawing, collage, and painting. I appreciate when many layers emerge in the artwork.

Life, in my view, is often not simple. I am deeply touched by many things and situations. With this inclination towards depth, I enjoy artistically experimenting with contradictions and mysteries, exploring new possibilities for design. This is often reflected in my images.

Additionally, I am fascinated by linocut – the clear decision-making between black and white. But I also enjoy "painting on the computer," playing with colors and gradients that can easily be undone, in contrast to linocut.

Both are very different working methods. I like a lot of variety and abundance, but perhaps I also lack the perseverance to stick with one technique."

- 6) You are skilled in many areas of art such as painting, graphic design and illustration. Would you describe yourself as a versatile creative personality?

"Yes, indeed. There are many exciting approaches for me in life. I am also deeply involved in contemporary dance. I earn my money through graphic design, but deep inside me is the desire for my personal artistic expression. It is painting that interests me the most, where I can still develop further."

- 7) Where do you find inspiration for your projects, and how do you stay motivated during creative challenges?

"I often get ideas while dancing. My body is an important means to listen to myself, to perceive myself, and to let daydreams simply flow. To surrender to a new inspiration.

Or I might be in a bad mood... Then I sit quietly and watch which images come, and I take them as the beginning of an artistic work.

Sometimes I feel internally that the next image is 'on the way.' Then it's as if channels open that are closed in everyday life. It feels like I perceive differently and more. I no longer see images realistically, but I paint with my eyes. Then I know it's beginning.

Driven, I sit down in front of the work, look at it, and let it affect me at the same time. Often, music helps me to get into the creative flow.

Sometimes I just need silence, and every little noise distracts me and annoys me. Then I go into the emotion. Often it's anger that gives me energy, that gives me more courage and a 'who cares' feeling, allowing me to work on or paint over parts of the image in a wild way that I didn't dare to do before. It's the dedication to the process, the willingness to be surprised by what wants to come onto the paper. Deep inside, I know that I can trust the process."

- 8) Can you tell us a little about your work environment? In what kind of environment do you feel comfortable?

"Earlier, I had a small, affordable studio a few houses down. It was brilliant. Unfortunately, the house was sold, and that dream ended.

Now I work in a small room that also serves as a guest room. My creative process is often interrupted, which can be difficult for me. Then it's time for a break. I continue in my mind or take enough distance so that I can see the unfinished painting with new eyes when I can continue.

- 9) You have some very creative brand collaborations, such as logos and packaging. What is it like to work from a brief? How do commissioned work affect your creative process?

When I do graphic commission work, my working method is quite different: it's far less personal and comes less from within me. I focus much more on the client. I am completely with that person and what they wish for or want to see in their graphic project. Only after I have gotten to know the client and have a good feeling for that person can I start. In a creative process, I develop a synthesis of the client's wishes and my ideas. My goal is to provide the client with a professional and tailored graphic creation, thereby increasing the visibility of their brand through uniqueness and clarity. The most important thing is the idea, which is connected to an appealing design. For me, these are two worlds: in the graphic design world, I am outward-oriented, while in free artistic work, I am inward-oriented.

- 10) What do you think about the illustration techniques of our age? How has digitalization affected you artistically?

To be honest, I don't really see myself as an illustrator. However, I sometimes use the computer to "paint" free portraits. I am fascinated by how the world of shapes changes when I "paint" with the mouse or create vectors in color areas and gradients. It goes much faster, and I don't have to be so careful because I can quickly undo steps with "Apple-z."

I've noticed that I have been working more by hand lately. That makes me want to "paint" on the computer again!"

11) In your view, what role does art play in society today?

"In my eyes, it is all about the uniqueness of individuals these days. Anyone who wants to can engage in artistic activities and post on social media, resulting in an immense abundance of works and perspectives. Evaluating or judging these is not the point for me. It's about taking the opportunity to show one's innermost self to the whole world and to be seen.

12) You have received many awards in your career, which one was the most meaningful to you?

I believe it was the logo and stationery design for my former flatmate Ulrike Müller (who, by the way, is now a well-known artist in New York) that I wanted to create as a birthday gift many years ago. Since she loved cows at that time, I designed a logo and stationery based on "cows" for her in 1994, which was published in the renowned CreativClubAustria yearbook.

Especially because it was not a commissioned work, but simply came from love, I am particularly pleased with this recognition.

12) Do you think innate talent or hard work is more important for having a creative perspective?

I think, it's innate talent. Without talent, it is just hard work, which can also lead to progress, but in my eyes, artistic work often revolves around the genius, the idea, the sudden inspiration. Most of the time, it is an unpredictable process, a mix between passive reception and creative act."

14) What upcoming projects or themes are you excited to explore in your future work?

I want to delve even deeper into artistic, free work. I realize that there are still many emotions and energies lying dormant within me. I would like to paint with oils and experiment with mixing different techniques within a single piece. I want to be surprised by what can flow onto the paper through my hands, my mind, and my head.

My goal is to incorporate more space into my paintings. I am still very attached to sketch-like portraits and drawings, but I want to engage more with composition in space. I want to find more distance from realistic drawings and dedicate myself more to free, wild strokes, surfaces, and abstraction. Often, the destructive side of me wants to come out, transforming the image in the process. But it's not about destruction; it's about the balance between wild freedom and gentle, patient expression. It's about transformation, which I want to explore, while also recognizing that I often lack the courage to "transform the image into something new." This is a challenge for me.

Content-wise, I am also working on freeing myself from emotional childhood experiences and personal obstacles. By consciously perceiving my moods, I delve into myself and then try to express these moods creatively. As a result, my paintings may also appear provocative and disturbing.

For me, painting is like a self-conversation and a form of self-therapy. There is still much to explore. It's about becoming free from concepts/opinions/ideas of what a "good" painting should be.

And I would like to make a strange film together with my husband (who is a film editor). Many years ago, I acted in a small free theater group and started writing a screenplay..."

15) How would you define your art in one sentence?

"Painting is the deep insight into people – including myself – and being touched by this insight."