

Visitor information

Margot Bergman

Museum Langmatt,

3rd March to

28th April 2019

In cooperation with Urbane Künste Ruhr and the Museum Folkwang Essen, the Museum Langmatt is holding the first European solo exhibition of the work of the American artist Margot Bergman (*1934 in Chicago). This exhibition offers a condensed display of her remarkable artwork, created over the past 15 years. Visitors will discover a great artist who created a brilliant body of late artworks.

The small-format portraits that Margot Bergman has been creating since the mid-1990s oscillate between surreal metamorphosis and Art Brut. The artist finds landscape pictures by unknown artists at flea markets. In these pictures, she discovers latent faces, which she causes to emerge out of the natural scenery by means of partial overpainting. The melancholy expression of such a face often has a touch of humor shining through, freeing the depicted person from their despondent mood through playfulness. A delight in carefree fantasizing and invention is a thread running through the work of Margot Bergman. No matter how small their format, her images have a magical power that is infectious. The portraits that she has painted in recent years dispense with overpainting. They show fictional persons upon whom life has left many marks.

So, why bring Margot Bergman to the Museum Langmatt? For a number of years now, inspired by the figurative French Impressionist paintings in its collection, the museum has exhibited contemporary paintings whose themes are appropriate and which, in one way or another, shed a new light on elements of Impressionism. Margot Bergman's artistic approach is the type of corrective that becomes necessary from time to time. With her impulsive painting style, she occupies a position that is liberating in that it is contrary to, for instance, the portraits of Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Her pictures demonstrate perfectly that the portrait-painting genre is by no means as outdated as is often suggested.

Instead of being hung in chronological sequence, pictures from different years are placed together to create interesting dialogues. This reveals the chameleon-like diversity of Margot Bergman's artwork. It is like looking into a kaleidoscope: new variations on the portrait constantly appear. In some places, impulsive, childlike representations of hares appear: in an artful game of hide and seek, they turn and dodge cheerfully, each time achieving a startling evasion of our gaze as we seek to identify them.

Margot Bergman puts the focus, seemingly incidentally, on strong women, particularly in her artworks from recent years. They may appear wounded and despondent, but they look out at us quietly, at peace with themselves. Not a loudly-ringing condemnation of society, but a relaxed confidence with traces of subtle humor – and this in spite of all the unlovely disfigurements inflicted by life. What is all the fuss about, they seem to whisper softly to us. You cannot escape old age, and what once inspired fear has lost its horror.

Markus Stegmann

The exhibition will be on display in an altered form, under the title Margot Bergman. Inner and Outer Landscape, at the Museum Folkwang in Essen from the 4th of May to the 30th of June 2019.

Publication with texts by Britta Peters (the artistic director of Urbane Künste Ruhr), Markus Stegmann (the director of Museum Langmatt) and John Yau (art critic and lyricist, New York), 80 pages, Ger./Eng., hardcover, CHF 28.00 / 20.00.

Information on Margot Bergman:
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