

Inge Mahn

18/3 – 7/5/2016

Inge Mahn's sculptures restate the world of everyday objects as pictorial projections since the 1970s. Her sculptures are based on acute observations of fundamental interpersonal actions and their social context. The materiality of white plaster and the altered scales detach Mahn's motifs from their original functionality. Her works are subversive "gestalts" communicating to the outside what is tacit, excluded, worrying, and weird.

Inge Mahn studied with Joseph Beuys and participated in the documenta 5 curated by Harald Szeemann in 1972. Her international career started in the 1970s, she had solo exhibitions at, among others, Tranegarden Kopenhagen (1976), Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf (1980), PS 1 New York (1981), Lenbachhaus München (1983), Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin (1985) or Württembergischen Kunstverein Stuttgart (1990). Her works are included in collections such as at Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin or Kunsthalle Helsinki. In 2015 the galleries Edition Cahiers d'Art in Paris, Akademie-Galerie – Die Neue Sammlung in Düsseldorf and Galerie Max Hetzler have shown solo exhibitions by her. Inge Mahn came to the fore as a groundbreaking sculptress of her generation, classified as a path-breaking artist of Social Sculpture.

The current show places key works from five decades in a dialog with each other. The pieces belong to Mahn's most important groups of works, the "Stühle" ["Chairs"], "Türme" ["Towers"], "Behausungen" ["Housings"], "Säulen" ["Columns"], as well as kinetic objects. They distinctly represent three basic principles of Inge Mahn's artistic practice: first, "confronting the burden" (physically and psychologically), second, "natural laws are to be equated with the laws of interpersonal relationships", and third, "seek the legitimation of art in the social sphere".

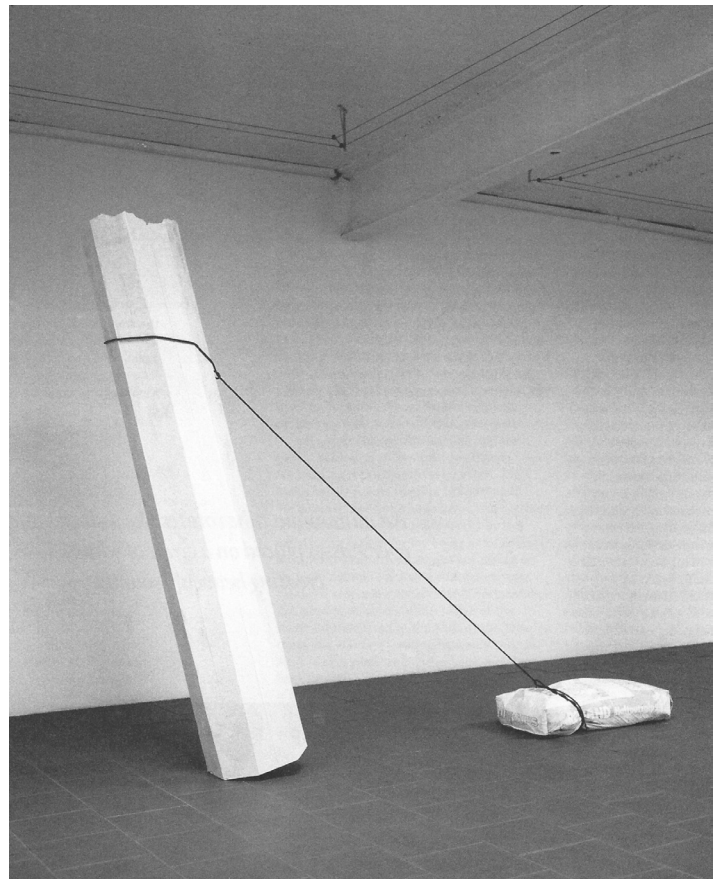
"Balancierende Türme" ["Balancing Towers"] (1989) was created during a stay in New York and will be on view for the first time in Europe. Two towers with the same weight balance their load reciprocally. At issue are the basic interpersonal actions of burden sharing, supporting and being supported. The tower is a main motif in Mahn's oeuvre and stands per se for the architectural manifestation of power in various ideologies.

Mahn's balancing towers bear the possibility of all types of towers, both sacred and secular: minaret, belfry, surveillance tower, viewing tower. With Mahn, towers are relieved of their function, they become "gestalts" and show the fragility of permanent relationships.

In "Säule, Gipssack ziehend" ["Column, pulling a bag of plaster"] (1988) natural laws are equated with interpersonal relationships in both a tragic and comical way. Mahn's octagonal column is on the verge of tipping over, but is held by a plaster bag that it "drags behind it" like a dog. The column appears "to determine the way" and is at the same time quite literally "dependent", since it would otherwise fall over.

A further important group of works in Mahn's oeuvre are housings as a basic form of social definition.

The "Lichttasche" ["Light Bag"] (1988) becomes a flexible housing for a halo. The "Vogelkästen mit Türklingeln" ["Bird Boxes with Doorbells"] (1981) are larger than "everyday" bird boxes and become ironic symbols of human coexistence. The bird houses remind one of the life plan of living in "row



Säule, Gipssack ziehend (Column, pulling a bag of plaster), 1988
plaster, rope and bag of plaster
overall dimension approx. 210×38×38 cm

houses". They combine individuality and conformity, security and threat. Security and conformity can be found in what supposedly remains the same, individuality is lent by the highly different traces of work, while threat is revealed in the connected electric circuits of the doorbells — if one circuit is interrupted, "nobody" in the row can be reached.

"An einander gelehnt" ["Leaning against each other"] (1992) and "Die Schaukel" ["The Swing"] (1978) belong to Inge Mahn's group of chairs and in different ways show the potential of human interactions. "An einander gelehnt" strikingly reveals that only the one who can support and allows him- or herself to be supported can remain in balance. "Die Schaukel" is suspended slightly elevated as a playful observation point, withdrawing from the "dominating" order of "down there". It appears singular, while simultaneously offering one to "take a seat". With the "load" of the second "vis-à-vis", it begins to sway, but ultimately returns to a secure balance.

The kinetic sculpture "Scheibenwischer" ["Windshield Wiper"] (1988) is site-specific. In this case, the gallery window is coated with a gray color, a mixture of the three primary colors red, blue and yellow. Through the movement of the oversized windshield wiper, the view to the "auratic" white exhibition spaces is to be cleared, something that never succeeds however. Everyday life outside of the gallery becomes a part of the exhibition and is simultaneously excluded. This is juxtaposed by Inge Mahn's most recent sculpture "Auto" ["Car"] (2016), a seat becomes autonomous and holds a black ring like a steering wheel, like a halo, in front of itself.

Comedy and tragedy lie close to each other in Mahn's oeuvre, like in real life. The artist sees her sculptures as "stops" in between; contradictions are not disturbances but complements. In Inge Mahn's words: "I create an order to understand, or rather: I try to grasp the order that lies behind things. I want to know what the interrelations are and experience orders that I only assume. The orders that contradict our agreements or suspend them, yet that function together with each other."



Auto (Car), 2016
plaster on iron construction,
overall dimension approx. 113×120×55 cm

Biografische Notiz

Inge Mahn (DE 1943)

Exhibitions: 1972 documenta 5 (G); 1981 PS 1 New York (S); 1983 Lenbachhaus München (S); 1985 Künstlerhaus Bethanien (S); 1980 Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf (S); 1988 Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (G); 1989 Schloß Morsbroich, Leverkusen (G), 1990 Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart (S); 1996 Kunsthalle Helsinki (S), 1998 Kunstmuseum Reykjavik (G); 1999 Kunsthalle Kassel (G) 2015 Cahier d'Art Paris (S); Galerie der Düsseldorfer Kunstakademie (S);
Reviews and Portraits in 2015 (selection): BLAU; Frieze d/e. Institutional Collections (selection): Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin; Kunstmuseum Helsinki; Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf; Von der Heydt Museum Wuppertal.

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