

Inge Mahn

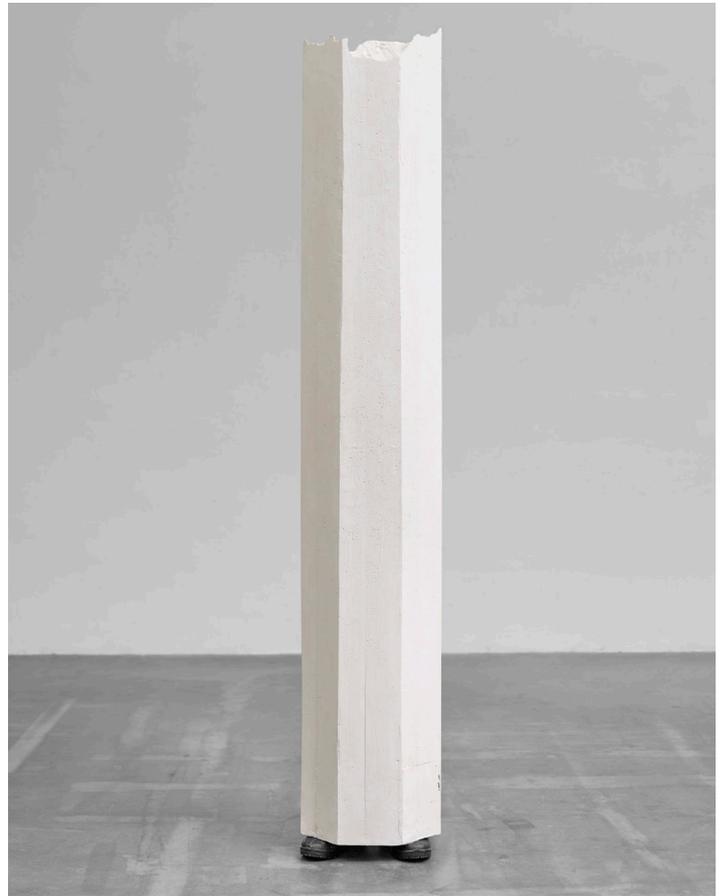
01/19–03/03/18

Inge Mahn's (DE 1943) sculptures cause their environment to resonate mentally. This close link between artwork and space makes her oeuvre highly topical again for a younger generation of artists and once more brings it to the center of attention of an international audience. In 1972, directly after studying under Joseph Beuys in Düsseldorf, Inge Mahn was already invited to the documenta 5 by Harald Szeemann for the section "Individual Mythologies", where her spatial sculpture of an empty "Classroom" became iconic. This was followed by international solo shows at, among others, Tranegarden Copenhagen (1976), Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf (1980), PS 1 New York (1981), Lenbachhaus München (1983) and Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin (1985). In 2017 Inge Mahn presented an exhibition with new pieces at the Kunstverein Braunschweig; and currently an artist's space at K 21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is dedicated to her.

Inge Mahn's sculptures and architectural interventions allude to concrete everyday objects and demonstrate their dynamic potential for change. The materiality of the works, often uncolored plaster, and the alienating proportions distance the thing-motifs from normality and playfully unfold a broad artistic field of what usually goes "unsaid", a kind of meta-language.



Hundehütten (Dog houses), 1976
installation view Max Hetzler Galerie, Berlin, Germany, 2015
plaster, chains, plastic bowls
each 52×41×51 cm (total dimension 52×164×51 cm)



Gestiefelte Säule (Column with boots), 2016
plaster, metal, rubber boots
213×37×37 cm

The current show in Düsseldorf latches on to Inge Mahn's previous exhibition at the Kunstverein Braunschweig, which in an itinerary of seven rooms was a sculptural "balancing act". The large group of "Stehende Vorhänge" (Standing Curtains, 2017) featured high, plaster-soaked lengths of fabric standing in the space. The title is misleading, since the objects have detached themselves from the context and move about freely in space without concealing anything. Their folds counter-balance their own weight. A dancelike play, a parade of sorts, commences.

The piece also offers continuously changing lines of sight, thus setting the room in mental and visual motion. The alienation of everyday patterns of behavior is continued in the two pieces "Balancierender Stuhl" (Balancing Chair) and "Balancierende Kugel" (Balancing Sphere, both 2017). In one case, a chair – in a reversal of its normal function – stands on its backrest and balances a large plaster sphere with its legs. In the other, a chair precariously balances on a sphere. The symbolically charged motif is mirrored and turned upside down.



Stehende Vorhänge (Standing Curtains), 2017
installation view „Inge Mahn | Nora Schultz“, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany, 2017
fabric soaked in plaster
dimensions variable

Inge Mahn's early work "Hundehütten" (Dog-houses, 1976) symbolizes human existence in a different way. The piece reminds one of the phenomenon of standardized row houses that in its diminished dimensions appears grotesque. In contrast, the "Gestiefelte Säule" (Column in Boots, 2016) stands in the room totally autonomously and functionless on two black boots. The usual basic order of lending support and being supported is mixed up.

Comedy and tragedy, as the constant threats regarding the heights from which humans can fall, lie close to each other in Inge Mahn's oeuvre. The artist sees her sculptures as "stops" in the intermediate stages of change. Contradictions are not disturbances, but belong to her method. Inge Mahn formulates this state of tension as follows: "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: orders that contradict our agreements or suspend them, yet that function together all the same."

Biographical Note:

Inge Mahn (DE 1943)

Currently Inge Mahn is showing a solo presentation at K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. 2017 Inge Mahn's exhibition was on view at Kunstverein Braunschweig. Her works are being represented in international collections such as the Istanbul Modern, Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin, Kiasma - Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki or Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal.

Further exhibitions (selection):

1972 documenta 5 (G); 1981 PS 1 New York (S); 1983 Lenbachhaus Munich (S); 1985 Künstlerhaus Bethanien (S); 1980 Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf (S); 1988 Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (G); Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart (S); 1996 Kunsthalle Helsinki (S), 1998 Kunstmuseum Reykjavik (G); 1999 Kunsthalle Kassel (G) 2016/17 Hamburger Bahnhof (G).

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