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Curator's Key

Curators talk about an artwork they keep coming back to

Anna Gritz, curator at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, on Maria Nordman's *Room with two doors (for a public park in Bochum-Weitmar) (1982/1989)*

Deep in the suburban landscape of the former industrial town of Bochum, Germany, *Room with two doors* "doesn't exist," Maria Nordman says, as much as it "verges on being" in a small, unassuming, custom-built brick structure that could easily be confused with a garage or maintenance shed. It is literally a room with two entrances that is empty on the inside - except, that is, for the lurking potential of an encounter. The small building (3 m high, exterior 14 x 6.75 m, interior 13 x 6 m) is one of many pavilion-like buildings that make up Situation Kunst (für Max Imdahl), an art compound with works by Richard Serra, Gianni Colombo, Norbert Kricke, and Arnulf Rainer. Situation Kunst is dedicated to the art historian Max Imdahl, who taught at Bochum's Ruhr University and is well-known for his efforts to radically expand access to art; his legendary seminars with factory workers at the Bayer plant in Leverkusen were published in 1979 in the book *Arbeiter diskutieren moderne Kunst* (Workers Discuss Modern Art).

Nordman's structure is situated outside of the compound proper and faces onto a park. Its layout is symmetrical: a small corridor leads from each of the entrances to the central space, while another corridor on the other side leads away from it. The "doors" allow light to enter the space, providing the only source of illumination. For Nordman, the work only succeeds when it is open to passers-by; she intended it to be accessible day and night, and even suggested it to be open at least once a year for 24 hours (stipulating 21 March and/or 21 September).

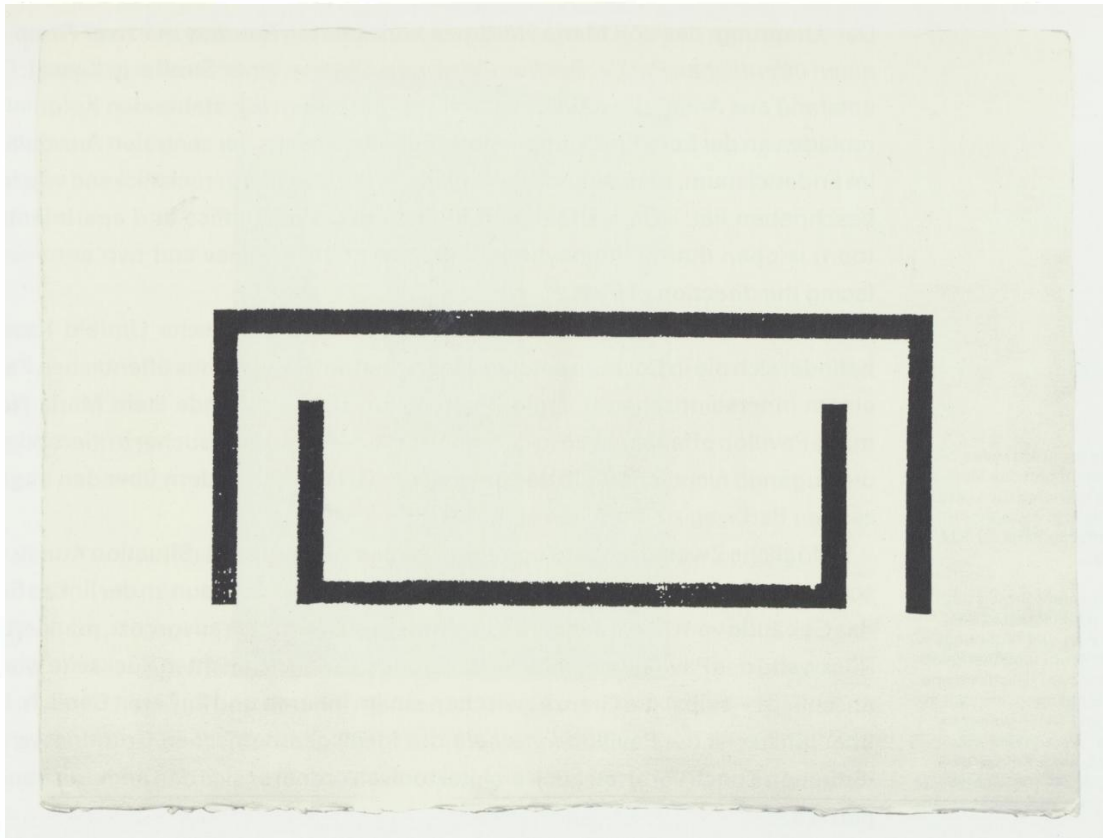
The work comes into being in the viewer's encounter with it - in an unobtrusive kind of participation whose qualities are determined by the history and memory of each visitor, the time of day, the smell, and the season, all of which are in permanent flux. Ambient conditions such as the temperature, how the trees and the shrubbery planted around the building diffuse the light, and the muffled sound of birds are all essential aspects of the work but, of course, beyond

the artist's (and the visitor's) control. When we are inside, these elements remind us that there is an outside, that this is not a neutral space, that it is made with and by whoever is experiencing the work.

Once this leap is made, the sparseness of the structure is no longer cold and reduced, but generous and inviting. Everything about it is if not quite domestic certainly mundane and humble, almost to the extent of disappearing entirely. Without any of the grand gestures of Land art, the focus is on our immediate environment on a scale that we are accustomed to navigate. The body and the space are directly connected, yet despite its humility the room has a theatricality that denies transcendence and keeps a palpable tension between the body and its surroundings. As if we were seeing ourselves from a security camera, we experience the encounter on a meta-level as well.

Rarely have I felt so implicated in the creation of a work, rarely have I felt abstraction and figuration to be so close to each other. But aren't they always? *Room with two doors* has at various stages in my life been like a palate cleanser, a way to reset my thoughts. In its extreme straightforwardness it manages to talk about much more than itself. Ultimately, its principles build the foundation of any art encounter. We ourselves are always part of them. Nothing is ever neutral, and there is always a living breathing, aging, feeling, sweating body at the centre of it all. It is that acute physical awareness that I have tried to account for when making exhibitions and thinking about institutions.

ANNA GRITZ has been a curator at KW Institute of Contemporary Art Berlin since 2006. Previously she held curatorial positions at the South London Gallery as well as London's JCA and the Hayward Gallery.



THREE TANGENTIAL MNEMONIC WORKS IN TIME

FRANKFURTER/ HECKERSTRASSE. 1977- (DOCUMENTA 6) -
this found room with two glass doors is on a street corner -
which I choose January 1977 & prepare in June; it is clarified to be open each day
in the presence of hosts accompanying the work (the Documenta team). --
Sited on a busy street intersection with cars & trams.

In time -- this work connects to

FRIDERICIANUM FACADE & PLACE 1987 (DOCUMENTA 8)
The exact size of the two glass doors the room of FRANKFURTER/ HECKERSTRASSE.
1977 - translate directly to mirror-doors attached to each side of top floor of the
FRIDERICIANUM FACADE- these are situated so that at Solar Zenith two sunspots walk
the meadow- at the pace of a person - these sunspots meet in time with any person(s)
at the white octagon made of used cobblestones of Kassel's sidewalks.

In time --this work connects to:

PARK HAUS WEITMAR 1985- PRESENT
Bochum University Art History Collection - For Max Imdahl (Building period 1982-85
realized in the park grounds outside by near to grounds of "Situation Kunst"-)
A two - door room for any two persons with entrance to the sun: keeping the dimensions
of the room: FRANKFURTER/ HECKERSTRASSE. 1977-

Not for being photographed or published as single arbitrary images:- this work changes
MOMENT BY MOMENT with any person's arrival -
& through atmospheric reaction with the solar -lunar sunray arrival

**COMPUTER DRAWING : LIVE MEETINGS IN PLANNING ON CONNECTED WORK DISCUSSIONS
IN SITU FOR REALIZED WORKS OVER TIME - 1967-PRESENT MARIA NORDMAN 2019**

Above: Maria Nordman, *For an Open Park (Bochum Plan)*, 1985
Ink on paper, 58 x 77 cm