

ARTNEWS

2017 SKULPTUR PROJEKTE MÜNSTER

For Fifth Edition, Skulptur Projekte Münster Extends to Marl, With a Thomas Schütte Melon on Top

BY *Andrew Russeth* POSTED 06/13/17 1:44 AM



Downtown Marl, Germany.

“All this area was empty field in the 1950s,” Georg Elben, the director of the Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten in Marl, Germany, said as he motioned to its city center, an array of Brutalist buildings built in the 1960s that sit in front of his institution. Those structures have decayed a bit over the past half-century. “Marl was once of the richest city’s in West Germany,” he continued. “It’s not really believable if you walk around now.” Many major companies, like a chemical manufacturer, left long ago, and the population never approached the numbers that ambitious city planners had forecasted.

That said, the plaza was springing to life that Saturday morning for a festival. A group of young girls were getting ready for a gymnastics display, four teens were sound checking for what turned out to be a very emo pop-punk performance, and men were readying grills for bratwursts. There was a waffle station, and ponies.

A group of journalists, curators, and art types were paying a visit to Marl from Münster, about a 45-minute drive away, to see “The Hot Wire,” a satellite exhibition for the fifth edition of Skulptur Projekte Münster, which was opening to the public the same day. Kasper König, the founder and artistic director of the Skulptur Projektete, had been enthusiastic about branching out to this less-well-off and less-well-known neighbor and was supposed to be on hand, but he was ill and unable to attend, so Elben gamely led a tour of the exhibition, an assistant wheeling an amplifier alongside him as he sprinkled facts about the city. “Marl was founded as a city only in 1936, by the Nazis,” he offered at one point. “As a sign of that, the founding day was the 20th of April”—Hitler’s birthday.



Richard Artschwager, *Ohne Titel (Fahrradständermonument B)* [Untitled (Bicycle Rack Monument B)], 1987, in Marl.

A seed for the first Skulptur Projekte, which occurred in 1977, was actually planted in Marl, Elben said, since it hosted two shows of public art, in 1970 and 1972, called “Stadt und Skulptur.” Given that the city was once flush and progressive, it actually used to acquire work regularly, and dozens of sculptures are now on view outdoors. There’s a nice little Richard Serra in the plaza, and behind the museum there’s a pretty impressive sculpture park that has pieces by Ian Hamilton Finlay, Ilya Kabakov, and others. That park alone is worth a trip to Marl.

“The Hot Wire” offers a feast for Skulptur Projekte devotees, including models for pieces included in the previous four editions, as well as selections from Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster’s contribution to the 2007 edition—miniature versions of many of the show’s most famous pieces. The display of new outdoor work in Marl is comparatively modest, though. Lara Favaretto has installed a rough-hewn sculpture with a little slit for donations that will go to a nearby organization that works with refugees scheduled for deportation, and Joëlle Tuerlinckx is having a 200-meter-long straight line drawn fresh with chalk spray every day in

the sculpture park. Also, Richard Artschwager's Münster bicycle-rack sculpture, which has one parking place high in the air, far beyond the reach of any bike, has been transported to Marl for the run of the show. (It was installed in Münster in 1987.)



Thomas Schütte, *Melonensäule*, 1987.

There was talk of moving one of the Skulptur Projekte's most-loved pieces, Thomas Schütte's pair of cherries atop a column (also from 1987), to Marl for the exhibition, but the artist vetoed that idea, saying he was concerned the piece might not survive the roundtrip. And so, instead, the artist went back to his archives and found a drawing he made of a melon split into three pieces atop a column that he had made in preparation for the 1987 show but never turned into a sculpture. The fabricated work is now looking radiant, standing tall in a parking lot in Marl. (As it happens, the cherries were originally displayed in Münster parking lot, though they have since been moved to a children's playscape, and the artist apparently isn't so happy about that, but that's another story.)

Though it looks pretty much identical, the melon piece is actually 13 percent larger than the cherries, Elben. He stated very emphatically that he hopes the piece can find a permanent home in Marl, but that remains to be negotiated. For now, it is on loan. He looked at it happily.



“Maybe you have seen that we don’t have so much graffiti,” he said. “Nothing on here, and it’s so inviting for somebody.” Indeed, the Schütte is immaculate. “Here in Marl there was a program launched already in the early 1990s where graffiti artists were invited to come,” he said. Artists were allowed to graffiti certain parts of a nearby parking garage. “They got a small ID card with no name but only a picture on it, so police could not detect who they were,” he said. “The graffiti scene remembers since that time, that Marl was always friendly to them, and therefore there is a [commitment], not to spray on the foundations of art here in Marl.”

“We have almost 100 outdoor sculptures,” he added, and though the odd kid sometimes does a little tagging, there generally aren’t serious issues. “I think it’s very unique, and I hope it stays this way,” he said.

Joelle Tuerlinckx, *Le Tag /200m, Marl*, 2017.