

From March 23 to July 28, 2019 the Kunsthalle Bielefeld is showing the works of artist Anna Oppermann (1940 – 1993). At the center of the exhibition is the large ensemble *Künstler sein (Zeichnen nach der Natur, zum Beispiel Lindenblütenblätter)* (Being an artist [Drawing from Nature, for Example, Linden Blossom Petals]), one of Oppermann's major works, which was on display at the documenta 6 in Kassel in 1977. The work represents the way that a new generation of artists regarded itself in the late 1960s and early 1970s Jahren, as they sought to break through the limitations of art in many directions, in terms of both form and context. Anna Oppermann's art articulates her demand to be regarded as an artist on an equal level with her male colleagues. Her "ensembles," as Oppermann called her installations, present the viewer with challenges. The works are made up of a confusing array of carefully arranged individual elements: objects, photographs, drawings, newspaper clippings, her own writing, copies of other people's writings, notes, photos of the drawings, and many photos of the ensemble's previous states. They assume that viewers are engaged and involved, aware of their own visual habits, and can withstand the constant contradictions. No other work by Oppermann is as full of visual elements as *Künstler sein* is. Containing more than a thousand individual components, it literally sprawls all over the space and is impossible to view as a whole, because the viewer is always torn between observing it from a distance or from close-up; in order to be able to see the small pictures and texts well, the view of the piece as a whole is lost.

Another focus of the show is on Oppermann's early work, which is being presented for the first time in the context of a museum. At the start of her artistic career, Oppermann worked with the "classic" panel painting format, depicting complex spatial situations in two-dimensional paintings. Her leitmotifs make an early appearance in her still-life-like arrangements and interiors. The transition from the two-dimensional surface to three-dimensional space is already set up in the early work and the exhibition allows us to see it as a consequential decision.

Besides the many drawings on paper and paperboard, Oppermann's early body of work also contains pencil and colored pencil drawings with collage elements on hardboard, whose motifs and color schemes show the influence of Dada, Surrealism, and Pop Art. From around 1965 to 1968 Oppermann worked on visual worlds that cite Pop Art's brash colors and colorful world of youth and consumer culture on the one hand, and on the other, create an obvious sense of closeness to the Surrealists' dream and fantasy landscapes. Thematically, Oppermann's art is oriented toward socio-political issues—primarily equal rights for men and women, individual fears, and social expectations. She continued to work on these themes from the mid-1960s onward in her ensembles, questioning the economic situation of women artists, their difficult position in a male-

Anna Oppermann Künstler sein

23 03 19

28 07 19

Press conference:
21 03 19 / 11 a.m.

Opening:
22 03 19 / 7 p.m.

dominated profession, and a critical exploration of the conditions, assumptions, and mechanisms of the art market. Her own status as a woman, mother, and artist is also the starting point for her observations of general social structures.

Anna Oppermann was born in Eutin, in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, in 1940. She died in 1993 in Celle, Lower Saxony. From 1962 to 1968 Oppermann studied painting, graphic design, and art education at the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst in Hamburg, and parallel to that, philosophy at the University of Hamburg. She participated in the documenta 6 (1977) and 8 (1987) in Kassel and the Sydney Biennial in 1984. Her works can be found in many public collections, including those at the Hamburg Kunsthalle and the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach.

Curators: Meta Marina Beeck, Dr. Friedrich Meschede

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