

Kunstverein BRAUNSCHWEIG



Press Information

21.06.2025 – 05.10.2025

SINE HANSEN

Sine Hansen

Press tour: Thu, June 19, 2025, 12 pm

Opening and summer party: Fri, June 20, 2025, 7 pm

Braunschweig, June 10, 2025. Kunstverein Braunschweig is pleased to present the first major institutional exhibition of the artist **SINE HANSEN** (*1942 in Inowroclaw, Poland, †2009 in Braunschweig), who lived in Braunschweig from 1961 until her death in 2009. Hansen is one of the few German representatives of Pop Art. Since the mid 1960s, she created precise, large-scale depictions of everyday objects, machines, and technical devices in the immediate vicinity of Villa Salve Hospes, transforming them into monumental icons. With this exhibition, Kunstverein Braunschweig closes an important art historical gap and brings attention to a previously underrecognized yet central artistic figure of the German postwar period.

At the same time, the exhibitions **B. INGRID OLSON** *A Feminine Thought* and **NOAH BARKER & PAUL LEVACK, TOM BURR, SAM COTTINGTON, DANA E. IO** *Four Outdoor Scenes* are opening.

Exhibition text

"The characteristics of my production lie in the potential for controlling aggression. Objects conceived this way are carriers for certain types of information. Transformed into signs, objects are projected from their customary surroundings onto a plane where they function in a way that is unusual for them."

Sine Hansen, 1970

This quote comes from a text by Sine Hansen on her own work – a rare document, since the artist showed barely any interest in capturing her artworks in words. As soon as a work was finished, she saw it as existing independently in the world.

It is only by bringing together different sources, and through conversations with the artist's daughters – more than 15 years after her death – that we are now able to form a clearer picture of Sine Hansen. It is no coincidence that the first large-scale institutional of her work to be staged since her death is being held at the Kunstverein Braunschweig: Hansen moved to the city to study, attending the Hochschule für Bildende Künste between 1961 and 1966, and subsequently made it her home.

Until now, only tentative attempts have been made to locate Hansen within the history of the German postwar avant-garde. Her body of work, which predominantly consists of paintings, screen-prints, and sculptures and largely deals with mass-produced everyday objects, is often associated with Pop Art. With her paintings especially, reference is also made to the influences of the hard-edge style, which became popular in the USA in the 1950s and advocated clearly delineated, glowing color fields and geometric forms, without brush marks or blending. While this initial classification makes sense in both general and art-historical terms, it reveals nothing about the "aggression" Hansen mentions, which might be more poetically described as a seductive and provocative sense of presence.

The exhibition at the Kunstverein Braunschweig presents paintings from the early 1960s to the early 1990s. On the one hand, it brings to light the conceptual consistency with which the artists remained committed to a reduced and clear formal vocabulary and glowing colors in her series. On the other hand, it also seeks to trace the above-mentioned aspect of seductive provocation. The central focus of the exhibition is on works depicting tools in the form of unusual pliers, which illustrate the conceptual stringency and clarity of Hansen's artistic practice and trace her stylistic development over time. It is important to mention that the artist's work is in no way limited to plier motifs, however: alongside these tools, she also depicted numerous other objects in her paintings, all the way up to complex arrangements of entire groups of objects.

For the exhibition in Braunschweig, the architecture of the upper floor of the Villa Salve Hospes was adapted by redesigning many of the doors and windows using temporary display and wall elements. In doing so, care was taken to ensure that the spatial redesign also reflects the conceptual approach of the exhibition –



namely, to offer a better understanding of Sine Hansen and her work. Many of the doorways were closed off with simple wall panels, in order to provide more hanging space for the large-format paintings. This produces a clear sense of changing rhythm in the hallway, with white walls alternating with the gray rear sides of the panels slotted into the door frames. While the paintings are displayed within the rooms, the hallway side of this display features photographs by the artist depicting different social contexts and phases of her life. These two sides of the display reflect how the meager reception of Hansen's work until now has given way to a renewed interest in her as both an artist and a person. In order to gain better insight into Hansen's practice and approach to art, this text is accompanied by an interview with her daughters, Imme Sagemüller and Nora Meyer. There are still more doors to be opened in this regard, however, if we are to better understand Sine Hansen's work and the context of the time she lived in.

The exhibition opens with the paintings *Osramkneifer* (no. ##) und *Ruhrfrühling* (beide 1964), which function as a pair. At the bottom edge of the image, Hansen positioned the fulcrum of a pair of pliers with open, rounded arms. In the middle of the upper edge, she placed a light bulb. In *Ruhrfrühling*, she reverses the direction of pliers and object so that the arms project downward from the upper edge of the image, stopping just in front of rose. Both works are characterized by the juxtaposition of mechanical and breakable objects, and as such even early on exemplified the tension that permeates her compositions, which might be described as their dramaturgical force. At the same time, the specific positioning of the pliers in the paintings gives them the appearance of hydraulic claws like those used on cranes, here engaged in grasping or squashing the delicate objects.

In comparison to Hansen's later depictions of pliers, the distinct ornamentation of the individual elements here is striking: the different parts of the pliers stand out from one another both in terms of color and graphically, and they appear static in comparison to the sweeping lines that characterize the surfaces of the rose and the light bulb.

One important group of works, which form the core of the exhibition, are the so-called *Spannungszangen* [Tension Pliers], which were produced during the 1970s and can be identified as falling into several distinct types. Works like *Spannungszange* (1974), *Schreitende Zange* (1975), *Grüne Zange* (1975), and *Liegende* (1978) all suggest human poses, as their titles sometimes do. The seductive power mentioned earlier is particularly evident here, strikingly emphasized by the works' monumental dimensions. Presented in elegant, sweeping lines, Hansen's pliers recall organic and technical objects alike in their forms, radiating both femininity and masculinity. They bring to mind pin-ups – stylized erotic photos and drawings from the first half of the 20th century, which often reduced female bodies to their prominent curves, such as hips, busts, and buttocks. Such images presumably were and still are found particularly often in workshops – male-dominated spaces, that is, and the exact same environment where Hansen's pliers are located. Some of the pliers are depicted in action, grasping spheres in their arms. While no actual movement is depicted, their idiosyncratic use of color makes the tools appear dynamic and imbued with energy. Each set of pliers appears in front of a monochrome background, with the artist choosing a primary color for the tool's body that is contrasted with others on its outer edges, which follow the contours of the object. This specific and impressively precise application of paint is the result of hands-on research conducted by the artist. Through an acquaintance at the Technical University of Braunschweig, the artist gained access to a polarimeter. This device makes it possible to visualize mechanical stresses in solid materials using the optical rotation of polarized light.

It is notable how the artist exaggerates the depiction of the pliers by strongly emphasizing their pointed elements. By styling the *Spannungszangen* as characters, the psychologizing dimension that runs through the artist's entire body of work appears more clearly than ever in this series. Perhaps these pliers should be understood as self-portraits – or at least as an engagement with the patriarchal structures of the art world, which Hansen inevitably found herself confronted with as an ambitious young woman artist, particularly since she attracted great attention even while still at university, as her daughters recount.

In the late 1970s, Hansen intensified and altered the way she depicted the objects reproduced by the thermal camera. In *Rohrzangenspannung* (1975), *Scheibenkreis* (1976), *Hakenspannung* (1976), *Papageienzange* (1977), *Fischzange* (1977), and *Generalzange* (1977), the tools take up almost the entire space of the canvas. Hansen now used strongly contrasting colors across their entire surfaces, further

strengthening the fluorescent effect of the original thermal images. Within this series, the paintings *Papageienzange* and *Generalzange* both illustrate the tendency for psychologization – a sort of



anthropomorphism in depicting objects that conveys an individual character or inner state, making these two works in particular appear like portraits.

The final group of works presented in the exhibition was produced in the 1990s and is lesser known than the works from the 1960s and 1970s. While the large-format *Liebe Glaube Hoffnung* (1993) still features recognizable objects, Hansen freed her paintings of any representational functional function at all in later years, devoting herself entirely to color and its potential for producing optical effects. *Durch den bedeutsamen Faden verbunden I* (1996) and *Durch den bedeutsamen Faden verbunden II* from 1996 resemble labyrinths, painted with an almost mechanical precision that makes the surfaces of the canvases vibrate. Influences from the world of digital imagery can seemingly already be observed at this point.

As mentioned at the beginning of this text, the exhibition at the Kunstverein Braunschweig is an initial attempt at bringing the idiosyncratic, subversive, and sovereign work of Sine Hansen into the ranks of the German postwar canon. With its precise balance of controlled “aggression” (to use Hansen’s term) and sensitive formal vocabulary, Hansen’s approach reveals itself to be both unconventional and groundbreaking, making her work relevant far beyond the context of its production alone and allowing it to be effortlessly integrated into contemporary discourse around aesthetics and art.

Cathrin Mayer, Director and exhibition curator

Biography

Sine Hansen (1942 Inowroclaw, Polen – 2009 Braunschweig, Germany) was a German Pop Art painter. She studied at Braunschweig University of Arts under Peter Voigt and Johann Georg Geyger, and was a master student of Roland Dörfler. Between 1964 and the late 1970s, she participated in numerous institutional and private exhibitions, including *Figurationen* at Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart (1967) and *Aktiva 71* at Haus der Kunst in Munich (1971). She undertook working residencies at Schloss Wolfsburg, as well as in Amsterdam and Paris. From 1967, she was a member of Deutscher Künstlerbund. In 1978, she married the painter Jobst Meyer.

Work by Sine Hansen are included in numerous public and private collections, including: mumok – Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation, Vienna; Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen; Wolfgang Hahn Collection, Cologne; Städtisches Museum Braunschweig.

Kunstverein BRAUNSCHWEIG



Selected Program

Talk with **NORA MEYER** and **IMME SAGEMÜLLER**

Saturday, June 21, 2025, 2 pm
Free of charge, plus admission
In German

Director **CATHRIN MAYER** in conversation with the daughters of **SINE HANSEN**.

Director's Tour with **CATHRIN MEYER**

Thu, July 17, 2025, 6 pm
Free of charge, plus admission
In German

Director's Tour with **CATHRIN MEYER**

Thu, September 25, 2025, 6 pm
Free of charge, plus admission
In German

Talk with **BARBARA REISINGER** and **CATHRIN MAYER** about the work of **SINE HANSEN**

Sat, September 27, 2025, 1 pm
Free of charge, plus admission
In German

BARBARA REISINGER teaches at the Institute of Modern and Contemporary Art History at University of Stuttgart. Her research focuses include the history and theory of art from the 19th to the 21st century, as well as the history of exhibitions, institutional critique, and infrastructure critique. Barbara Reisinger will analyze the work of **SINE HANSEN** together with **CATHRIN MAYER**, with regard to art-theoretical and discursive perspectives on Pop Art.

Further information and the complete program at: kunstvereinbraunschweig.de/program

SINE HANSEN

Sine Hansen

Exhibition dates: 21.06. – 05.10.2025

Curator: Cathrin Mayer

Venue: Kunstverein Braunschweig e. V., Lessingplatz 12, 38100 Braunschweig

Opening hours: Tue – Fri 12 pm–6 pm, Thu 12 pm– 8 pm, Sat, Sun 11 am–6 pm

Admission: Regular € 5, Discount € 3

Visitor service: T 49 (0)531 49 556, Mail: info@kunstvereinbraunschweig.de

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Further information about the exhibition: <https://kunstvereinbraunschweig.de/exhibitions/sine-hansen/>



Image Preview



Sine Hansen, *Papageienzange*, 1977, Courtesy Estate Sine Hansen and EXILE.



Sine Hansen, c. 1966, Courtesy Estate Sine Hansen and EXILE.



Sine Hansen at Galerie Querschnitt, 1971, Courtesy Estate Sine Hansen, Photo: Christian Egelhaaf.

Exhibition views will be available from June 23, 2025, in the press section of our website:
<https://kunstvereinbraunschweig.de/en/information/press/>

Kunstverein BRAUNSCHWEIG



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