



left

Julian Raxworthy in Bruce Nauman, *Square Depression*, part of the Münster Sculpture Project 07.

■ I came here to Münster as the second part of what could have been a four-part grand tour of art. I went to Kassel for Documenta, but couldn't afford to go to Venice for the Biennale or to Basel for its art fair. I hadn't planned to go to Münster for the Sculpture Project 07, but a friend said I may as well go if I was in the Netherlands anyway. I came over the border into Germany through Arnhem, driving at somewhere from 130 to 180 kilometres an hour.

Münster is a very nice town in comparison to many in this part of Germany. The Allies bombed flat a hell of a lot of cities, and they've been replaced by a brown austerity that gets to you after a while. Münster is old in its heart, and dignified. The old centre still stands and has a few squares and many, many churches. Around the squares are great colonnades with medieval-ish columns and openings. I have loved colonnades since I visited Florence: they are prototypical negotiating devices between architecture and landscape architecture. These ones are like a weird, north-European renaissance variation on the theme. It was raining while I was there, so I got to see why Münster needs them. They are full of conservative, pricey shops selling clothes I could never afford, and the services of lawyers and bankers. It's like Double Bay or something. Found a good art and architecture bookshop, though.

I walked into a deli, followed some businessmen to the counter and ate what they ate, standing up: great schnitzel and potato salad – German, but not stodgy. Then I pretended to go back to work, too. I was surprised to see a building that was influential to me as a student: the city library, by expat Aussie firm Bolles Wilson. It's a classic postmodern, deconstructivist project. It's all angles and corners, but is beautifully crafted and impressive overall. The librarian proudly gave me a tour of and a booklet on the project, which the town loves. She seemed particularly happy to show an Australian project to an Australian.

The Sculpture Project is a bit strange and inconclusive – mostly invisible. Münster has run these events every ten years since 1977, but there has not been much effect on the city. What the event does do is change your sense of the city. You suspect art of being everywhere – you walk around and look at normal things and think – “are you (bin, seat, sign, person, etc.) art?” I got the guidebook from the big gold info box and started purposefully tracking the pieces. I think I was hoping for something big, but I should have expected something ephemeral, so fleeting it's really not there at all. I walk close to corners looking for oddities, speakers, hell, just strange behavior. I mistook an artist for a homeless person and missed a critically acclaimed work.

I noticed one piece, though, a public toilet with chandelier and flowers. Another work is a petting zoo in a car park, where I interacted with the animals. It's a culture/nature thing. I eyed the goat warily while he approached. The attendant said, “take the beer outside, bitte [please].” Sorry, I thought, I didn't know that goats were such boozers. Finally, I got to the Bruce Nauman piece, designed in 1977 but not built until this year, and was satisfied. That's what I call a sculpture – but these days it really just looks like landscape architecture.

I don't believe in public sculpture. I liked the town more than the show, and that night over drinks in an old gas station that was previously a sculpture, too, I read the catalogue. The show is a ruse to introduce visitors to the town. But what about the art? What of its qualities? The next day, when I visited the gallery, it featured a retrospective of all the other projects since 1977, when it was Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and so on – the modernist big boys. As I move along the gallery's timeline (1977, 1987, 1997, and now 2007), I see sculpture disappear. Welcome to the Münster Sculpture Project. Don't bother looking for art: you are the sculpture. ■

Julian Raxworthy