

Outside Architectural Confines

In the category of works by Asher that take place outside the institutional space, three of his outdoor works – in Munster (1977), Groningen (1979) and Montreal – further speak to the morphological variety of his production, which is always contingent on the purposes of an exhibition and the conditions at its site. Although these works were intended to be viewed outside of brick and mortar confines, all three represented institutionally based circulation and connection, although in a less concrete manner than the physical manifestation of the museum's heating system in the Bern exhibition.

In 1977, Asher, invited to participate in the first instalment of Skulptur Projekte, an exhibition organized subsequently once a decade by the Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte in Münster, confronted the question of producing an outdoor sculpture without creating a discrete or monumental object confined to one place. Throughout the nineteen-week space of the project, Asher arranged for a small (slightly over three-meters long), white camping trailer to be parked in nineteen different locations across the city and its environs. The selected sites – which changed weekly and included an alleyway, in between parked cars, outside of a housing project and along a grassy riverbed – formed a trajectory that moved away from the museum for the first half of the exhibition, returning toward it during the latter half. In each of its parked positions, the trailer, unhooked from any motor vehicle, inserted itself – as a rounded, windowed container for temporary occupancy – into the urban and suburban landscape (fig. 18-21). In symbiotic manner, the trailer metaphorically attached itself to the locales in which it was successively stationed without ultimately straying from its organizational centre at the Landesmuseum. Figuratively grounded by the museum – the trailer's centre of gravity – the vehicle delineated the boundaries of an artwork that was absorbed into the entirety of the city of Münster, within a work that critiqued the fixed and immobile object. It anticipated Asher's ensuing revision of sculptural practice in Bern, where the work overtook the entire Kunsthalle, albeit within an enclosed architectural framework rather than within an open-ended urban context.