

## **Karin Sander Lapis Lazuli, 2003**

New building of the Tübingen University ear-, nose- and throat-clinic.  
Uncut lapis lazuli ca. 300 kg



An uncut lapis lazuli stone costing the budget made available for this project – approximately 100 x 100 x 100 cm or weighing 300 kg – is placed in the entrance hall of the central patients' section in the Tübingen University ear-, nose- and throat-clinic. Lapis lazuli is reputed to help cure the kind of diseases treated here. It plays an important role in the history of European medicine and art. A precondition for the stone's medicinal efficacy has always been its purity. Today there exists a flourishing trade in very pure lapis lazuli, which clearly a growing number of people believe will cure them of all kinds of illnesses.

Lapis lazuli owes its name to its deep blue colour – the name is derived from the Latin, Persian and Arabic for “blue stone”. It was used for jewelry in antiquity and has been found in the graves of Egyptian pharaohs. It also used to be honoured as the “stone of heaven”. Pulverised lapis lazuli was used to make ultramarine, a pigment with a long tradition in European art. The stone's rarity and the long distances that it had to be transported from the Middle East made it extremely expensive. In the Middle Ages the pigment was used to represent only the most sacred religious themes, and in the Renaissance its use was contractually regulated between artist and patron. It was employed to colour only certain very special parts of a picture, such as the cloak of the Virgin Mary (see Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford, London, New York 1972, pp.11–23).

In the cult of the Virgin Mary, which grew steadily from the 12th century onwards, ultramarine made from lapis lazuli came to represent purity itself. The size and beauty of this lapis lazuli stone attracts the gaze of patients and visitors alike. Its intensive colour radiates a positive aura. A plaque close by informs patients and visitors of the healing qualities attributed to the stone, especially as regards the illnesses treated in the clinic.

K. S.

# Karin Sander



**Karin Sander, 2002**

60 photographs, compiled from private photo archives of persons with the name Karin Sander  
Digital print, each 60 x 50 cm

## Karin Sander, 2002

For the work “Karin Sander”, German, Swiss and Austrian telephone listings were used to find the addresses of women with the same name. They each received a letter with the request to make a personal photograph available for a work by Karin Sander. The altogether 60 photographs received from Karin Sanders each one a self-chosen representation of the respective person were framed in identical formats and melted together as one work, which establishes a subtle gap between biography, history, social situation, time, place and artistic action.

The viewer unconsciously starts to think about all these individual Karin Sanders; who they might be, what their lives look like, what they do and what made them take part in this project. At first, the biography of the artist Karin Sander retreats behind this project just as in her other works, but on a second view it becomes obvious that she expresses herself distinctly, especially here. It is her very own action, which brings all these Karin Sanders together and shows in a very simple manner that the configuration of each biography – the shape of our lives, is precisely linked to the interaction of history, time, place and all persons and actions one has to deal with, even if they do not have the same name as us. The viewer starts to develop a personal relationship to each of them.

Harald Welzer

## Karin Sander People 1:10, 1998-2001

3D bodyscans of the living person. FDM (Fused Deposition Modelling), Rapid Prototyping, ABS (Acryl-Butadien-Nityl-Styrol), Airbrush.



People are laser-scanned using a bodyscanner that employs a 3D photographic process originally developed for the fashion industry. Their data is then sent to an extruder, which recreates their body shape slice-by-slice in plastic. It is a lengthy process, but it results in an exact reproduction of the person in question – a three-dimensional self-portrait in a pose chosen by the subject. The figure is produced entirely by mechanical means, and the replica stands in the middle of the exhibition as if transposed directly from the real world. This process was developed especially for this project, in which it is being used for the first time.

K. S.

## Karin Sander Chicken's Egg, Polished, Raw, Size 0, 1994

### Karin Sander Wallpieces



**Chicken's Egg, Polished, Raw, Size 0, 1994**  
Exhibition at Kunstmuseum St. Gallen 1996

The operation of sanding down and polishing the rough, dull shell of a chicken's egg then placing it on a plinth transforms this profane object into an almost transparent sculpture. It mirrors and absorbs its surroundings, and at the same time exposes something of its inner self – in the soft tinge of yellow that is visible where the egg meets the plinth.

The polished wallpieces are created by removing an extremely thin layer of paint with all its irregularities, about one-tenth of a millimeter thick, from the wall surface. By sanding the wall down numerous times using increasingly fine sandpaper, the wall beneath, which is covered with emulsion paint, is polished to a high gloss. The picture is created not by applying material but by removing it. The polished surfaces of the wallpieces mirror sections of their surroundings and alter their composition according to the position from which they are contemplated. The refined composition of the surface dissolves the boundary between the massive character of the wall and the space in which it is contemplated.

**Wallpiece 300 x 420 cm, 1996**  
Kunstmuseum Bonn,  
Polished wall paint, 3 parts

**Wallpiece 220 x 840 cm, 1995**  
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

**Wallpiece 18" x 24", 1994**  
The Museum of Modern Art, New  
York



K. S.



**Karin Sander**

**Center of Gravity/  
Center Point of the City Münster,  
1997**

“Skulptur. Projekte in Münster”  
Von-Kluck-Straße 34/36, Münster  
Gauß-Krüger co-ordinates:  
right: 3405456.8 m, height: 5758707.1 m  
Geographic co-ordinates:  
51° 57' 20,24" north, 7° 37' 28,36" east  
Concrete, paint Ø 130 cm

The center of gravity of Münster is calculated for the city’s “Skulptur. Projekte in Münster”: a calculation method developed for this project by Prof. Lenzmann and data from a geographical survey conducted by Dr. Grünebaum are fed into a computer to determine the city’s centre of gravity – or geographical centre. The calculation is based on 2,808 points located around Münster, determined by the Gauß-Krüger projection system, which form a polygon whose centre of gravity can be surveyed, located and defined on the surface of

the globe. The “objective” central point of the city thus calculated lies at an unexpected location, outside the city’s historical and social centre. It thus triggers off a process of historical redefinition and social deconstruction.

Today the geographical centre of Münster lies at Nos. 34/36, Von-Kluck-Straße, on the boundary between a private house and a Catholic girls’ school – far away from the market place and cathedral which constitute the city’s historical center. This work encompasses the whole area of the city in its present extent. The centre of gravity defines the city as one huge sculpture, while as a single point it reduces it to its smallest physical dimension.

K. S.



## **Karin Sander Wall in Pieces, 1994**

Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden  
1,177 clip-frames in 27 standard formats,  
offset printing

A photograph is made of a representative piece of wall in the exhibition rooms of the Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden then duplicated

using offset printing. The prints are cut to fit 27 standard sizes used for clip-frames, placed in the holders, then hung on the wall about 5 cm apart. 1,177 picture holders are needed to fill the wall. All the framed duplications are numbered and signed, as is customary for a limited edition. They may be purchased – prices varying with size. Thus the installation gradually disappears in the course of the exhibition as its constituent parts are sold off.

K. S.





## Harald Welzer and Karin Sander: On Making Things Visible

A Conversation

**Harald Welzer:** Let's start with the most difficult question: what must a work by Karin Sander fulfil?

**Karin Sander:** What must a work of mine fulfil? I must be able to work using resources that actually exist, that are already present within the system, and that can turn the system against itself. I must be able to read things from a location, the situation, of a museum or gallery. And the work must both reveal something and also remain mysterious. It must transcend itself and gesture towards something that was not previously visible. In other words, it must render something visible that is already present but that has hitherto escaped perception, that exists in a latent state. If the work provokes amazement and perhaps amusement as well, then it is successful.

**Harald Welzer:** You speak of amazement, of transcendence and mystery. These are classical, almost old-fashioned demands made of art. Can you be more specific?

**Karin Sander:** Well, it would be misleading to say that a work must absolutely produce these effects. But if it is good, if you get it just right, it does indeed do just that. In other words, in the end the work reveals more than I planned, more than I projected into it at its conception. The conception of a work is itself a process of constant development, a constant exclusion of possibilities that you no longer wish to pursue. This doesn't mean that you know exactly what you are developing. My work is perhaps best characterised by the fact that when I start out, when I first confront an exhibition situation or a problem, I have no idea what kind of work will emerge at the end. After all, my works differ greatly in terms of the material and instruments used, and perhaps also in terms of the methods. These are determined by the problem that I have to solve – or that I think I have to solve. In other words, in each case the next step is not defined for me in advance, so that the works that emerge are always very different from each other. They may have a lot to do with the works that have gone before, but it's quite different from, for example, going into a studio where I know I will find paints and a canvas – in other words where I will at least know where to start. Perhaps my works are primarily linked together by this accelerating process of exclusion – by my continually learning, discovering, what solutions I can reject, which ones I don't have to spell out any more.

**Harald Welzer:** If one were to describe your works, one might say that – independently of whether they involve spatial or social situations – you are able to extract quite astonishing insights from what you find already existing in the situations. Or more precisely, you are able to release quite astonishing capacities for achieving insights that were not apparent beforehand.



Chicken's Egg, Polished, Raw, Size 0, 1994. "Leiblicher Logos – Vierzehn Künstlerinnen aus Deutschland", an exhibition organised by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart Sammlung/Collection Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

Would it be correct to say that you yourself achieve these insights as you carry out the work in question?

**Karin Sander:** Take for instance the Chicken's Egg, Polished. The idea originally came to me when I was asked to participate in an exhibition on "food". The exhibition did not really interest me at all, and I never took part in it. But the idea arose from this context. So when I was invited to take part in the exhibition "Leiblicher Logos – Vierzehn Künstlerinnen aus Deutschland" (Embodied Logos – Fourteen Women Artists from Germany), I discovered that this Chicken's Egg, Polished in fact represented the heart of the "embodied logos" in question. In other words, the work came into being in an entirely different context, finding its true context only in this exhibition in which it was able to take on a significance of its own. After all, the fact that it can be eaten is the most banal aspect of an egg. Much less banal is the role it plays in cosmological terms, in myths of origin, and as a creation symbol – the role it plays in the world's religions and of course in the history of art – and not least its material and formal qualities, which make it an incredibly ambiguous object, in terms of both form and content. The egg thus embodies many aspects, and the Chicken's Egg, Polished is also capable of thematising both itself and the entire exhibition in which it is displayed.

**Harald Welzer:** As a mobile object, the egg can be exhibited in a range of different contexts. But I'd like to go back to your site-specific works, in particular the indoor installations. One could say that you analyse the rooms for your installations with incredible precision. The installations are really analytical works, and fortunately they almost always possess an auratic quality as well.

**Karin Sander:** First you have to consider the entire situation and all the details that determine such a situation. And then one of these details may unexpectedly strike your eye and become the starting point for your own work. This starting point may then become lost as the work itself develops and may disappear without trace by its conclusion.

**Harald Welzer:** It's rather like a writing experience in which an entirely different text from the one you had originally planned emerges at the end.





Wandstück 3-teilig (Wallpiece, 3 parts). 1993/96. Polished wall paint, each part 9.8 x 13.8 ft.

**Karin Sander:** Exactly. The questions are clearly defined, but in coming to grips with the situation you encounter, the questions and also the type of answers you are looking for begin to change, and in the end something emerges that you had not previously envisaged. This is precisely what motivates you to do anything in the first place. If I could see in advance how a project is going to end, I'd have absolutely no desire to carry it out. The realisation, or the result, must surprise me too.

**Harald Welzer:** And then it also surprises the observer. But in fact your work does embody differing degrees of complexity. Whereas the Wandstücke (Wallpieces) and the Chicken's Egg are almost compulsively, sensually convincing, for instance, a work like the Mittelpunkt von Münster (Center of Münster) is more complex, not so readily accessible.

**Karin Sander:** But in retrospect, after I'd completed all the calculations for determining the topographical center of the city, this work was no more complex than others. You see this flat, red plinth standing on the ground and you position yourself on it and think, "Now I'm standing in the center of Münster." In other words, arriving at this result is complicated, but the result itself is quite simple. You can mentally reconstruct the process, although all traces of it have disappeared and it is not foregrounded.

**Harald Welzer:** Can we move the discussion onto a biographical plane? I don't want to ask a dumb question like, "When did you know that you were going to become an artist?" But after all, you do have a sense of when certain questions started to take on a definite autobiographical significance, of when you began to develop an intense interest in specific themes. Was this so in your case?

**Karin Sander:** Yes, there are certain things I did that I would now interpret in this way – although of course I didn't at the time. I recall a number of things, for example the fact that when I was studying art I was not at all interested in "theme" as such. And this gave rise to the following situation: I'm holding my paintbrush in my hand, the most amazing, thickest paintbrush I've ever held, with long, black bristles, and I begin to paint on the table with this new brush, but without using any paint. And this process of painting something on the table that nobody can see,

that leaves no trace, produced the best picture I'd ever painted up until then. Nothing remained. I had no water, no paint, nothing. Perhaps I moved a few specks of dust around, but otherwise there was just the brush gliding over this surface. Yes, and then recently I reconstructed an earlier work of mine. In our house there was a sort of cavity formed by a flight of stairs and a ramping above it. And over this cavity I built a floor using beanpoles and blankets, that has a lot to do with the floor installation in New York – in both cases an additional horizontal plane is created that redefines the entire spatial situation. While reconstructing the earlier work I discovered that it was quite difficult to put together. It was a complicated construction, and I'd forgotten how I'd attached the poles so that they didn't roll together in a heap.

**Harald Welzer:** Why did you reconstruct this work? After all, it seems like quite an unusual thing to do in the context of your other work. Your work does have a link with childhood insofar as it arouses astonishment, but not beyond that, at least not explicitly.

**Karin Sander:** I was invited to take part in an exhibition in Cologne called "The very first". And when I tried to recall what exactly my first work had been, this one came to mind – a horizontal plane or form that was to recur constantly in my work. But back then I couldn't return to the original location; the house was sold years ago and my parents haven't lived there for ages. But last year I was invited by the city of Metzingen to create something for their jubilee year. And when you return to a place that you left at a very early age, there's no point in bringing something from the present with you. After all, the organisers had really invited me back because I had grown up there, and so creating a new work would have been a little anachronistic. So I reconstructed the old work, which admittedly wasn't a real work of art in the strict sense of the term.

**Harald Welzer:** Hm... and in doing so you of course deliberately evaded the expectations of the Metzingen jubilee organisers, who most certainly would have preferred a contemporary work by such a famous daughter of their city as the artist Karin Sander to a reconstruction of one of her childhood works. I find these references to childhood interesting. Why this theme?

**Karin Sander:** It's not childhood as such that interests me. For one thing, it's a question of testing and understanding such a "work" – of not simply trusting in memory and thinking "okay, that was kind of nice," but of reconstructing something from memory that used to exist in a place to which you have been invited because you've been there before. Is that childhood? Basically, I could have reconstructed any work I created when I lived there, no matter whether I was 20 or 10 or 5 years old at the time. That's not so important. I did not want to go back there with something that I'd made after I'd left – that had nothing to do with the place. And besides, they would probably have liked a new work just as little or just as much. Whereas a work like that suddenly finds itself being measured by today's standards. A lady from some art association or other came up to me and started talking about an artist who also works with bean-poles. And then she said, "But you did that way back in 1964!"

**Harald Welzer:** Amazing! But on the other hand it is really the case that this blanket installation really does contain elements to be found in your later work.

**Karin Sander:** Yes, perhaps in retrospect you could see it as a prelude to later works. Such a designation most avoids the danger of projecting something back onto the past that did not exist back then.

**Harald Welzer:** I don't really believe that examining earlier accomplishments or activities to determine how they relate to later ones simply involves projecting something back onto the past.

Of course, neither do I expect you to conclude by saying, “From that point on I knew that I wanted to be an artist.”

**Karin Sander:** I didn’t want to be an artist at all. I had lots of other plans. From today’s perspective it would be more accurate to say that after a certain point in time it was clear that I couldn’t prevent myself from becoming an artist.

**Harald Welzer:** When was that?

**Karin Sander:** Perhaps three or four years after the Abitur (the German school-leaving exam). After all, I didn’t start studying art right away. First of all I worked at odd jobs; I travelled, intending later to go into medicine. Then I started an apprenticeship as an art restorer – I lasted for two weeks, during which became clear to me what I was going to be. I was allowed to do real restoration work almost from the start. I was supposed to restore paintings with architectural motifs on some church windows. We had removed the old paintings and were supposed to reproduce them exactly. I faithfully duplicated the first few motifs, but then I began to ignore the originals completely. I started to incorporate entirely different patterns. Although they conformed stylistically with the rest, they were made up of totally different ornamental patterns and combinations. Nobody noticed back then, and nobody has noticed anything ever since. But I realised that reconstructing and repeating something is possible only up to a certain point, after which it begins to take on an independent existence. So I climbed down from the scaffolding and said to myself: “This isn’t the place for me!” Yes, and then you just know. And up until then you don’t know. You try again and again to approach this point. You know that it was there in your previous work but that in your current work it is definitely not exactly where it used to be. So where is this point? Trying to find the answer to this question is really the driving force behind the evolution of a particular work.

**Harald Welzer:** Do you think that these days you can find this starting point for a work faster than you could in the past?

**Karin Sander:** No. It takes just as long, or perhaps even longer. You cannot plan it strategically and say, “I need this amount of time,” or make specific calculations. Things just take time. I think that my way of working is primarily characterised by my first having to place myself in a kind of vacuum, which is an extremely difficult thing to do. It takes an incredible amount of effort to create the necessary space of time from which everything that might interfere with your work – your private life, organisational things, the telephone, and so forth – is excluded. But you have to make this effort, to think of your studio as a vacuum in which you can create something only when it is completely empty. It takes more and more effort to pump out all the air because over time a lot more things start to force their way into the vacuum. And once you have succeeded in sitting yourself down in this vacuum, you ask yourself, “So what?” You are overwhelmed by tiredness, and at first you can’t do a thing. And then, when you’re ready, the air starts to leak in again somewhere. Maintaining this vacuum – not letting the air pressure in your studio reach that outside – takes up so much energy that you have to be careful to keep enough in reserve so that you can take the next step in a genuine spirit of untrammelled play. But you can only create something that you were not aware of before, that did not exist before, by going through this process.

**Harald Welzer:** So you first have to create a vacuum? Strange – I couldn’t stand it.

**Karin Sander:** Yes, but it’s a pleasant space to be in. You could say that it’s an unpredestined, an undefined space, a space in which you don’t have to eat or do any chores, in which time is freely available for creating what you want to create.



Werner Meyer 1:10, 1998 - 2001

**Harald Welzer:** Yes, but it's still strange. Normally you try to avoid situations arising in which nothing happens. Such situations are psychologically almost unbearable. Nothingness is immediately associated with boredom; there's something threatening about it. What's unusual about it as well is that our sensory apparatus is permanently active, constantly bent on plugging gaps as soon as they occur.

**Karin Sander:** Yes, but it's precisely the gaps that are interesting. And incidentally you can also find yourself in a vacuum while you're travelling. I do lots of travelling in search of these gaps.

**Harald Welzer:** Is your empty space akin to the painter's white canvas?

**Karin Sander:** It may be for a painter but not for me. I'm not sure that I want to take the canvas into this empty space, and I also don't know whether I want to use paint. Because the very beginning is so undecided, an empty situation is created into which you can really bring something in from the outside. But you're always only ready to do that when you have excluded everything else.

**Harald Welzer:** What role does chance play in your work?

**Karin Sander:** Chance does play a role in the realisation of a work. The difficulty is recognising chance and accepting it, then incorporating it into a work. There's this cut-out piece of wall covering in the Galerie Anselm Dreher in Berlin. Under it is a yellow rectangle, whose upper left-hand corner is black. And there's a work by Polke entitled *Höhere Wesen befehlen: Rechte obere Ecke schwarz malen!* (Higher beings issued the command: paint the upper right-hand corner black). Such things happen if you accept chance. And incidentally, the process by which such works come into being is also made evident. In this case the cut-out piece of wall covering is placed next to the exposed surface.



Center of Gravity/Center Point of the City Münster, 1997. "Skulptur. Projekte in Münster", Von-Kluck-Straße 34/36, Münster. Gauß-Krüger co-ordinates: right: 3405456.8 m; height: 5758707.1 m. Geographic co-ordinates: 51° 57' 20,24" north; 7° 37' 28,36" east. Concrete, paint Ø 130 cm Beton, Farbe, Ø 130 cm

**Harald Welzer:** But I don't find such things important in your work. After all, in the case of the Wallpieces the process of sanding down is also not evident.

**Karin Sander:** But it's also not concealed. At the edges, for in-stance, you can see quite clearly how each wallpiece was made. It is simply as it is, and I think that's important. For instance I think it's important that the Chicken's Egg is indeed a chicken's egg and that it remains one. In this respect the titles of my works always play the same role; they are purely descriptive of the material and the process: Wand, geschliffen (Wall Polished) – that's exactly what is, and nothing else.

**Harald Welzer:** Yes, the quality of your work consists in its simply being there: a sanded down wall is a sanded down wall, nothing more and nothing less – nothing metaphorical about it at all. The Mittelpunkt von Münster and Werner Meyer 1:10 are immediately convincing; they just don't need any further explanation. Perhaps we could move from this observation to a more general topic. I think it's problematical that art always has to be explained. It often creates a disparity between texts about art and the art in question. I believe that you don't need to explain good art, indeed that the definition of good art is that it doesn't require explanation.

**Karin Sander:** I agree. I notice this when I work with students. If a work is really good, you contemplate it in silence, and you don't add much afterwards either. The artist who created the work does not feel any urge to say anything, and likewise the person who contemplates it does not feel compelled to ask questions. You look, and you just know. Explanation might be in order, on the other hand, if a work is reproduced in a photograph which doesn't represent it clearly. Then you need a text to help you know what is really going on.

**Harald Welzer:** But a purely descriptive text.

**Karin Sander:** There's lots of things you can't see in a photograph. A photograph shows only one aspect of a work, or two, or three – but not the complete range of aspects that you can see when standing before a work. And so it helps if somebody adds these aspects to the photograph

through a text. You need to know what the dimensions of the work are, for instance, or what



Wall in Pieces, 1994. Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden. 1,177 clip-frames in 27 standard formats, offset printing.

material it's made of. But I'm also interested when somebody writes about the relationship between one of my works and a work from, let's say, the 15th century, that I haven't noticed myself.

**Harald Welzer:** The problem starts when people start to interpret works or to place them in some grandiose art-historical context.

**Karin Sander:** But there's nothing wrong with that so long as you can establish meaningful historical relationships. It's just that writers are often so preoccupied with what they already know themselves that they sometimes forget to really look at a work of art. And then they ascribe something to the work that in reality has nothing to do with it, simply overlooking what should really hit them in the eye or even overwhelm them. Art allows you to understand something non-verbally because you can place what you see in a context that you yourself create.

**Harald Welzer:** I would even say that good art is defined as that which cannot be expressed in words. If you can completely translate a work of art into language, then it is not good art.

**Karin Sander:** Texts can furnish ways of approaching art, but they can never actually get through to the actual location of a work. This is a fundamental fact. Art and what you can say about it exist side-by-side and can approach more or less closely to each other. But they can never coincide. And it's a good thing they can't.

**Harald Welzer:** I also find it fascinating that children often have no difficulty in understanding your work. When he was just four years old, my son called one of your Wallpieces "the transparent picture" – which seemed to me a very precise description.

**Karin Sander:** Yes. Of course, each person interprets them completely differently. Everybody understands art according to their own capacity and volition for understanding. And these depend, symbolically speaking, on where they're coming from. If a fashion designer looks at a work that has to do with material, they understand it in a completely different way from somebody who's into music. Everybody brings something different to a work of art. Your notion of what is good art is based on your past experience, the background against which you understand a work. And that's equally true of art historians. They understand a work against the background of art history.

**Harald Welzer:** Yes, knowledge can be an insuperable barrier to understanding – because you always think that you have reached an understanding of a work although you may still be nowhere near understanding it. And I think that the notion that it is necessary to explain art in order to understand it is precisely fatal to such an understanding.

**Karin Sander:** But that's because people go into a museum and immediately start questioning the point of the art they find there and asking why it's supposed to be good art. They admire Slevogt's and Monet's works, and then they are challenged to find contemporary works exhibited on the same floor just as good. Naturally the question arises as to how something completely different, something coming from a diametrically opposed direction, can be just as good as older works. And here I really believe that art mediators have a duty to build bridges between contemporary and past art.

**Harald Welzer:** But I think that in the final analysis people are afraid of art because they always believe that the understanding they bring to a work can never be sufficient to even get close to it – which is of course not true.

**Karin Sander:** Not entirely so. People cannot expect to understand a language that they have never spoken before, though they must at least be prepared to understand. Of course, you have to assuage their fears and let them know that they don't have to be that well informed. But they must take the trouble to look. Incidentally, one way of helping them to understand is to combine works so that certain relationships become clear – for instance by placing early and later works by the same artist side-by-side, or works by different artists dealing with the same problem. Such contexts can make art more accessible.



1:7,7... Unlimited, 2001. ART' 32 Basel. Plaster material, pigment (chromium-oxide-hydrate green)

**Harald Welzer:** Let's talk about your work again. Would you say that you work both in the tradition of conceptual art and in that of minimalist art?

**Karin Sander:** I don't feel that much affinity with minimalism. Repeating and exploring minimalist forms doesn't interest me. What is minimalist about my art is more the way I work with whatever I find to hand. My work is created from what is already there. Maybe there's something minimalist about that. But the minimalists invent forms and then work with them, set

up relationships between them and so develop a canon of forms. Inventing forms is just too personal for my taste. Being able to say, for instance, “I invented this form or that one” – I have no interest in that kind of thing. At the most I invent techniques or methods that can be used by others. In that respect I’m somewhat different from other artists. I don’t try and develop a canon of forms. Perhaps you could say that my minimalism is of the pragmatic variety.

**Harald Welzer:** So it doesn’t matter whether you carry out a particular work yourself or whether somebody else does.

**Karin Sander:** It isn’t important who carries it out. In any case, objects speak for themselves, just as they are. After all, I don’t make them. Take, for instance, the scanned figures: the work as a whole consists of what each individual brings to it – of the posture the subjects themselves choose when they are scanned. They’re self-portraits; they’re not subject to any influence of mine, except insofar as I invite the subjects to participate in the project. And these portraits are so condensed and complex – precisely through the process of miniaturisation – that anything that I might add to them, any artistic “style” I might impart to them would only obscure their meaning.

**Harald Welzer:** Let’s change the subject again: what does a concept like precision mean to you?

**Karin Sander:** It’s important. It is formulated in the work. And the quality of the work – whether the work is good or not – depends precisely on how the precision that lies at the heart of the work is defined – whether it is present or not.

**Harald Welzer:** What other concepts are important to you?

**Karin Sander:** Location, dimension, measurement, material. It’s not a case of discovering good ideas. There are plenty of good ideas. I’m also not interested in formal aesthetics whose aim is to make somebody or other more sensitive to something or other. I’m interested in subtly nuanced alterations that turn things around and present them in a completely different perspective. Picasso once said, “I don’t search, I find.” I’d say of myself, “I don’t invent, I find.”



The conversation took place on 1.1.2002 in Karin Sander’s studio.