

# artUS

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## JEPPE HEIN by Cara Jordan

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Danish-born Jeppe Hein is known for large-scale sculptures designed to pull in even the most resistant or inertial spectator. In the summer of 2006 he installed an aquatic pavilion at London's South Bank outside the Royal Festival Hall, enclosing visitors behind walls of water that rose and fell at random. Hein was also behind *360° Presence* (2002), a huge steel ball so triggered as to crash uncontrollably into walls when viewers entered Johann König in Berlin, and *Moving Benches* shown the same year at Cologne's Museum Ludwig—innocent-looking museum benches that started slowly moving when visitors ventured to sit on them. Now living and working in Berlin, Hein has never failed to create a scene.

As recipient of this year's A.I.R. program at SculptureCenter, Hein spent last summer constructing his awe-inspiring *360° Illusion* (2007).

Suspended from the ceiling in the rear of the main gallery, the sculpture is comprised of two rotating six-by-sixteen-foot mirrors connected at a 90-degree angle. A hidden motor slowly turns the hinged mirrors, capturing not only reflections of the room on each surface, but also their opposing and subtly changed counter-reflections, allowing the viewer to see the entirety of the gallery without moving an inch. Its immense wings dissolve into the brick walls of its reflections, complimenting the architectural space of the central gallery and providing alternate ("altered") perceptions of it.

The simple, geometric lines of *360° Illusion* clearly refer to Robert Morris's minimalist *Mirrored Cubes* (1965), though as with his past projects, Hein uses recent technology to his advantage to communicate through mechanical movement. As the sculpture revolves, the reflections of the gallery and the people inside turn in upon themselves, allowing the latter to explore the work based on assumptions about their own surroundings. Hein presents this "illusion" as a makeshift performance, transforming it into a participatory speculation on the phenomenology of looking.

This exercise in sensory deprivation and/or augmentation continues outdoors in SculptureCenter's courtyard, where a selection of four sculptures from his *Modified Social Benches* (2006) series introduces us to Hein's latest exploration of the bench and how the physical landscape molds our behavior. As with his earlier deformed "benchmarks," here Hein mimics the appearance of a typical park bench but with a slightly humorous twist, one that challenges our everyday sensibilities. Although these functional structures imitate some aspects of normal benches, they are nearly impossible to sit on—one is circular without a point of entry, and another's seat resembles a limp noodle resting on the ground between its supporting legs.

However impractical or incommodious these benches may appear, a visit to Hein's *Modified Social Benches I* installed at nearby Court Square Park in Queens, soon assuages all anxieties. With its arching, upside-down legs and inverted seating serviceably touching the ground, the public can both comfortably seat themselves and question their sensory expectations, allowing the artist to challenge the established relationship between public space and the physical landscape. Despite its minimalist aesthetic, Hein's work draws participants in without being overbearing, allowing commonplace humor to overcome any initial reserve.

