

SpaceWalk

The Hamburg artist duo Mutter/Genth have created a spectacular large sculpture in South Korea

On the 18th of November 2021, the large sculpture **SpaceWalk** by the Hamburg artist duo Heike Mutter and Ulrich Genth, located in the South Korean city of Pohang, was officially opened. Pohang is an industrial city or harbour city on the nation's southeast coast. The city has around 500,000 inhabitants, and is around three hours by train from Seoul, the capital city. Pohang is the business headquarters of the Pohang Iron and Steel Company (POSCO), one of the world's biggest producers of steel. **SpaceWalk** is a permanent artwork installation, and is a gift from POSCO to the city of Pohang. It is the largest contemporary public sculpture ever to be created in Korea.

SpaceWalk was designed as a spectacular large-scale traversable sculpture for the wooded hills of Hwanho Park in the northerly part of this coastal city. The sculpture takes up a total of 60 x 57 metres in terms of ground area. Illuminated at night, the artwork is open to the public, free of charge. It was created as a traversable track made from galvanised steel and stainless steel, 333 metres in length and resting on a concrete foundation. This gleaming silver sculpture can support a maximum of 250 persons at any one time. A stair winds through the landscape in numerous spectacular curves. Visitors enter the sculpture via a central access stair. After this, they can choose to climb the track in one of two directions. On one side, the path leads through a gently climbing passage. This culminates in a broad curve at 20 metres above the hilltop. From here, visitors have a magnificent view of Yeongil Bay and of the city of Pohang. If one chooses to go in the other direction, one finds a path that leads upwards somewhat more steeply. The visitors traverse a helix that, from a distance, appears to be precisely circular. Both of these walking tracks through the sculpture feed into a central loop structure that is not accessible.

The visionary sculpture **SpaceWalk**, with its characteristic curves and loops, initially puts one in mind of a rollercoaster. By ironically undermining conventional expectations of fast machines, however, this imposing artwork plays a subtle game with the concepts of speed and acceleration.

The two artists Heike Mutter (*1969) and Ulrich Genth (*1971) first became well-known internationally for the artwork "Tiger & Turtle - Magic Mountain", a traversable large-scale sculpture with the look of a roller-coaster that they created in 2011 on a heap elevated 35 metres above ground level in Duisburg.

The SpaceWalk sculpture, on the other hand, looks like a kind of drawing standing out against the sky — especially at night, because of the white LED lights (strips and modular) that are installed in the handrails and walkway to provide integrated illumination. It is rather like a long-exposure photograph in which the light of a torch is used as a drawing implement, to depict cloud formations and heavenly bodies. Seen from a distance, it constantly offers new perspectives. If one departs from one's vantage point, however, then the drawing dissolves, like a puzzle picture. SpaceWalk also references the local mythology of the Pohang region, and the prominent Korean tradition of watching the skies. The artwork functions ideally as an observatory, as the perfect place from which to observe the surrounding area, the night sky, and the sunrise and sunset.

The title SpaceWalk is taken from the terminology of outer space missions. It describes the act of exiting the space vehicle in the weightlessness of outer space. More literally, SpaceWalk can be understood to mean "a walk through space".

Heike Mutter and Ulrich Genth have been creating artistic projects together for public spaces and exhibition spaces at home and abroad since 2003. Their artworks always relate to the location and context, reflecting in diverse ways upon the shifting natures of the public sphere. Since 2007, the artist duo have been living in Hamburg, where Heike Mutter is a professor at the Hochschule für bildende Künste (HFBK).

SpaceWalk is the first large-scale artwork by the artist duo on the Asiatic continent.

Design: Heike Mutter / Ulrich Genth (Hamburg, Germany)

Art planning / organization: The Ton (Seoul, South Korea)

Architects:

3-D parametric planning, geometry, digital planning specialist: Designtoproduction (Arnold Walz, Philipp Rumpf) (Stuttgart, Germany)

Production planning, local architect and consultant: 9DIRECTORS & COMPANY+9ARCHITECTUS (Seoul, South Korea)

Structural engineering:

str.ucture GmbH (Stuttgart, Germany) The Naeun Structural Engineering co.ltd. (Seoul , South Korea)

Construction, production management, assembly:

PPOSCO E&C (Pohang, South Korea)

Funding: The work of art was donated to the city of Pohang by POSCO.

Press release: Nicole Büsing and Heiko Klaas (Hamburg, Germany)