

“In *Doors*, a performance, it’s about opening, closing and going through doors. The projected movements, together with my ‘life’ and with people involved with it, become a visual metaphor for an inner feeling for the passage of time.”

Nan Hoover¹

by Sofia Gomes, PhD fellow, 2019

Doors has been adapted in three ways, in three different media: performance, video installation and photographic collage, and since 1981 have been exhibited together and individually. This work exemplifies Nan Hoover’s working process – creating versions of a work based on a single theme, beginning with a photo collage, or study, and later adapting it to video and performance.

Since the artist died in 2008, one can no longer rely on Nan Hoover for questions regarding her work nor the requirements of display. Stakeholders, such as the nan Hoover Foundation,² gallerists, curators, museum staff, and former assistants are now responsible for the preservation and installation of her body of work.

In 2016, Nan Hoover’s archive, an important resource of texts, documents, journals, catalogues, correspondence, contact sheets, negatives, photocopies, photographs, drawings, sketches, objects and personal books, which was previously accessed and catalogued within the database of the holdings of the Archive with Collections of the Art Academy Düsseldorf, was transferred to the Nan Hoover Foundation at LIMA, Amsterdam, where her video works and carriers had been kept since 2013.

Doors’ case-study research is a result of compiling information from the archive, web research and emails correspondence between curators and museum staff who previously worked with the artist.

In 1980, Nan Hoover was awarded a coveted artist-in-residence grant by the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Dienst (DAAD). Under this grant she worked for a period of one year, between 1980 and 1981, in a studio in Bundesalle, which had been occupied previously by Nam June Paik and Shigeo Kubota. This one-year residency was a period of intense production for Nan Hoover. During this time she created works such as *Still Movement* (1980), *Coming and Going* (1980), and *Projections* (1980), exhibited *Fields of*

¹ Hoover, Nan. *Photowork, Video, Performance: Nan Hoover*. Ed. Wieland Schmied. Daadgalerie, Berlin DE; Künstlerhaus Stuttgart DE; Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam NL; Neue Galerie, Sammlung Ludwig, Aix-la-Chappelle DE, 1981

² <http://www.nanhooverfoundation.com>

Blue (1980) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and created *Color Pieces* (1980), and *Doors* (1980).

Doors is considered a key work in Nan Hoover's oeuvre not only because it was reproduced several times as an invitation card for solo exhibitions, but also because it has very appealing visual and aesthetic characteristics.

It is an enigmatic image; metaphorically speaking, doors are an entrance to somewhere else, to a different place, and are related with new beginnings and the unknown. By projecting the two videos side-by-side, the same actions unfold, a subtle rhythm is created by the continually closing and opening of doors, and the passage of the mysterious figure. As Renate Petzinger describes: "The hand that repeatedly reaches for the door handle and presses it down in both sequences can also be read as a metaphor for an important step in Hoover's career as an artist – for her move from painting to video art and for her shift from the creation of light on the canvas to the use of light from a position behind the camera – in short, for a moment in her life she still regards today as the liberation of forces of which she had never been aware before."³

Doors is related with the photo work *Coming and Going*, a colour variation of the same theme; both suggest the passage of time between individual poses, and both photographs combine two negatives and show this movement of coming and going in one single image.⁴ According to the artist, she used to use two negatives printed as one photo, extending the 35 mm frame to twice of its size, and creating the illusion of a horizontal space – "...the space between the negatives always being an important part of the composition. This allows me the possibility of moving the body through one or more frames creating an illusion of space."⁵ It is doubtless not without interest to note that her photographs made during her DAAD residency in Berlin, are expressions of movement and passage of time, and are a starting point for further development of the subject matter video and performance.⁶

In the artist's archive the drawings and preliminary studies were found, the work was preceded by an intensive graphic exploration and notes showing the creative process of Nan Hoover.

³ Petzinger, Renate and Dannenberger, Hanne. *Nan Hoover: 3 Installationen*. Wiesbaden: Museum Wiesbaden, 2006.

⁴ Perrée, Rob. *Dialogue: about Nan Hoover*. Cologne: Salon Verlag, 2001, p.45.

⁵ Nan Hoover's archive, Box 14/6, NP0005.

⁶ <http://www.videoarchiv-ludwigforum.de/artists-detail/an-hoover/> (access 06.06.2019).



Preliminary Nan Hoover's studies on the performance *Doors* (Nan Hoover's archive⁷)



Preliminary Nan Hoover's studies on the performance *Doors* (Nan Hoover's archive).



Performance and a projection at the DAAD Gallery, in Berlin, on 9 February 1981 (Nan Hoover's archive).

⁷ Nan Hoover's archive was accessed at LIMA, Amsterdam, during my internship, between February and July of 2019.



Performance at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart on 21 March 1981 (Nan Hoover's archive).

As a result of the one year's residency ending, in 1981 there was a travelling solo exhibition, with a catalogue, at the DAAD Gallery, Berlin; Studiogalerie Künstlerhaus, Stuttgart; Neue Galerie – Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen, and Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam.

Originally shot on two reels super 8 films, the films were projected side by side on a wall at body height, and Hoover would move front of the projections.⁸ According to the documentation gathered, it appears that the film projection and the performance were presented together only once in 1981 at the DAAD Gallery, in Berlin, on 9 February. In the same year, at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart on 21 March, only the performance was shown, according with the documentation found in the archive. After 1981, only the photo work and/or film/video installation, without Nan Hoover's performance, were shown in several group and individual exhibitions.

The last presentation of *Doors* was held at the exhibition Nan Hoover, October 22, 2015 – January 17, 2017, at the Akademie-Galerie – Die Neue Sammlung, Düsseldorf (Germany). The work was presented in a dark room, with two entrances of each side so people could enter and leave the space. The video was projected on a white wall. The projection took up the full horizontal length of the wall and was approximately 2 meters tall. It was set up in a such a way where visitors could experience the work in an intimate setting. Since then *Doors* was not presented anymore.

⁸ Leach, Dawn. *Nan Hoover. Catalogue Raisonné*, volume I, 2017, p.234.

Nan Hoover's archive is an important source of information for future researchers, and for the understanding of her oeuvre and personal life. Without the artist, the archive is a tool for preservation, a means for dissemination and for knowledge production. Accessing this archive made gathering important documentation related with the context, and meaning of *Doors* possible. Also, curators and museum staff who worked with Nan Hoover or installed her work in the past gave important insights on the work *Doors*. Combining the archive with this tacit knowledge brought information to light that will help with the preservation and installation of this work in the future.

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