



In 1949 Perry T. Rathbone, the director of the Saint Louis Art Museum,<sup>1</sup> received the most unusual delivery of an artwork.<sup>2</sup> Inside a hearse lying on a cot was a 15th-century gilded and painted wooden sculpture of the Virgin and Child. The owner of this German Gothic Madonna, Dr. F. C. Katzenstein, had hired the hearse to transport the delicate object from his home in Salem, Illinois. Although it was a short trip to St. Louis, the conscientious doctor, who had served as a U.S. Army medical officer in his native Germany during World War II, did not want to risk any potential damage. The Madonna had already traveled a great distance.

Originally belonging to his German Jewish parents who were killed in Nazi concentration camps in 1942, the Madonna had been seized by the Nazis. A former classmate of Katzenstein helped locate the sculpture, which in July 1949 was shipped to Salem from Wiesbaden, Germany, from one of the collection centers for art confiscated by the Third Reich. Soon after, Katzenstein coordinated its travels to the Museum where it remained on long-term loan until the Museum purchased it in 1961.

Such a rich story about a single artwork, its particular journeys through space, time, and history, is one of three compelling narratives unique to St. Louis that Berlin-based conceptual artists Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock have uncovered for their *Currents 107* exhibition, subtitled “The German Connection—Raft with Stranded Objects.”

Artworks speak of the past and history. They are tangible evidence of what has come before. Combined with facts found in newspapers and archives, such objects can tell their own stories. But what about memories—the intangible traces of the past, some more distinct and others more hazy when the past recedes? It is this very intersection of memory and history that Stih and Schnock investigate in their work. As with many of their

contemporaries—German artists born in the aftermath of World War II—Stih and Schnock have been deeply informed by the complex issues of Germany’s role in the Holocaust and the war.

In past projects for memorials and museums, Stih and Schnock have pushed, prodded, and pulled memory apart in attempts to shed new light on the past, perhaps to retrieve new kernels of truth. Yet memory is not truth. Instead, to steal a line from French author Marcel Proust, it is the *remembrance* of things past. What Stih and Schnock do is activate memory, questioning how memory is shaped and how it functions in public spaces. Their art is open-ended; they do not shut doors, answering a question with finality. Instead, they leave doors open, giving space to past stories discovered through dogged, extensive research.

The Museum’s exceptional holdings of postwar German art resonated with Stih and Schnock, allowing them to reflect upon their own positions as artists informed by German artist Joseph Beuys’s influential teachings and art from the 1960s and ’70s. Beuys theorized a new art form, “social sculpture,” and he believed that this participatory artwork, which merged artistic thought with human activity and performance, would bring about revolutionary change in society.

Not surprisingly, Stih and Schnock have drawn parallels between the travels of the 15th-century Madonna and those of Beuys himself for his legendary 1974 performance, *I Like America and America Likes Me*. A documentary video of this performance is now on view in the exhibition, *Postwar German Art in the Collection*, in the Museum’s new East Building. For his first performance in the United States, Beuys had himself transported via ambulance from the airport, lying on a stretcher, to the New York gallery where he would share a space with a wild coyote over the course of three days.

# WE LIKE AMERICA AND AMERICA LIKES US ME LIKE AMERICA AND AMERICA LIKES US

Stih and Schnock have installed their work *The Voyage of the Katzenstein Madonna* (illus.) next to the 15th-century Virgin and Child previously owned by Katzenstein, currently on display in Gallery 237. In their two-paneled work, the artists have depicted an X-ray image of the Madonna resting on a hearse cot, thus comparing and linking its journey with that of Beuys's 1974 trip. The artists have made a more overt and emphatic connection to Beuys's New York performance with a large banner installed in the north balcony overlooking Sculpture Hall. Colored red, white, and blue, it reads in capital letters, "We Like America and America Likes Us." Such a statement, repeated twice, speaks to their own position in the United States as a pair of German artists who enjoy working regularly in America.

For Stih and Schnock, who value not only intersections of memory and history, but also concepts of cultural exchange and mobility, public spaces such as the museum are fitting sites for investigation. Indeed, they interpret the museum as both a container and carrier of memory and knowledge, as a raft taking visitors down a river of history. Their selected interventions, including the banner in Sculpture Hall and the installation of their artwork near the Madonna, highlight such a passage.

This metaphorical raft-like journey continues in Gallery 338 with their installation of objects, collages, and other works. Here Stih and Schnock mine two more intriguing stories about St. Louis and German history, one of which begins in the late 19th century. Through discussions with leading Reichstag historian Michael Cullen, Stih and Schnock learned of an architectural model of the Reichstag that eventually made its way to St. Louis at the turn of the 20th century. For the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, German emperor Wilhelm II sent a large plaster model of the Reichstag, then under construction in Berlin, to represent the German Empire.

At the fair's end, decisions were made to send the model to St. Louis, a nearby city where many German immigrants lived. It was shipped to the Saint Louis Art Museum in 1897, then the St. Louis School and Museum of Fine Arts, its own entity within Washington University. After the Museum separated from the University in 1909, the Reichstag model became the property of the school, and at some point after 1917, the model was lost.

Considered the most important political building in Germany, the Reichstag is highly emblematic of 20th-century German history, from its use during the Weimar Republic and the fire in 1933 that helped the Nazis seize power, to its later reconstruction after the 1990 reunification of Germany. In *The Reichstag?* (cover) Stih and Schnock feature a hazy black and white image of the Reichstag, which the artists produced by repeatedly manipulating an archival image of the model from the 1893 Chicago fair. Using photography, drawing, and tracing, Stih and Schnock knowingly move further away from the authenticity, or, in the words of German philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin, the "aura" of the model. Each further manipulation continues to distance their own Reichstag depiction from its original, with the original—the lost model—already itself a reproduction of the building. In *Raft with Reichstag on the Mississippi*, Stih and Schnock have reimagined the Reichstag model on a raft drifting down the Mississippi River in 1917, perhaps to its eventual disappearance. In doing so, they allude to the parallel between the importance of the Mississippi to American culture and that of the Rhine River to Germany. The artists further examine this concept in their video *Liquid Traces* featured in Gallery 301.

Indeed, the legendary Mississippi played a germinal role in the third and last story the artists have brought to light in their *Currents* exhibition, another example of cultural exchange from Germany—this time not about an inanimate object like the 15th-century Madonna or the 1893 Reichstag model, but a real-life double agent of the Cold War era. The spy is Werner Stiller, an East German Stasi officer who became a counterspy for West German intelligence.

In 1979 Stiller escaped from East Germany and identified almost 100 agents, including the chief of the Stasi. West Germany enlisted the CIA to provide safe haven for Stiller. As Stiller explained, “[They] put a pile of color brochures in front of me and told me to choose a city. I’d always wanted to see the Mississippi so I chose St. Louis.”<sup>3</sup> With a new identity as Peter Fischer, he moved to St. Louis where he enrolled in the MBA program at Washington University and later became a banker on Wall Street.<sup>4</sup>

Stih and Schnock explore other fluctuating transformations of personal identity, memory, and history in the series *I Am Not Stiller* (illus.). Through the ghostly portrait repeated in this series, Stih and Schnock refer to the changing personae of Stiller, while merging these with the different identities of another famous Stiller, the fictional character of Swiss author Max Frisch’s 1954 novel, *Stiller*, a masterpiece of postwar German-language literature. This novel investigates the theme of shifting identities and the question of whether or not we can ever know what is true, what is real about a person.

Through three real stories (that seem too extraordinary to be true), Stih and Schnock have produced an absorbing and provocative exhibition on German history, identity, cultural mobility, and transnational exchange, weaving St. Louis into the broader and complex connections between Germany and the U.S. during the 20th century. Their engagement with museums as sites of storytelling and flux, and their fascination with the life and memory of art objects bring to mind what Beuys once said in 1975, “Because different people are always coming in, museums will continue to treat their objects in different ways. The museum ultimately exists in a state of transformation.”

Tricia Y. Paik  
Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

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1. From 1909 to 1971, the Saint Louis Art Museum was called the City Art Museum of St. Louis and was renamed the Saint Louis Art Museum in 1972.
2. A. G. Benesch, ed., “By the Mississippi,” *St. Louis Star-Times*, 1949.
3. Ian Johnson, “East German Double Agent Trades His Spy Gear for a Broker’s Briefcase,” *The Baltimore Sun*, July 12, 1992.
4. In 1986 Werner Stiller published a bestselling memoir in Germany, *Beyond the Wall: Memoirs of an East and West German Spy*, in which he did not disclose his new identity or his life in St. Louis.





F. C. KATZENSTEIN, M. D.

PHOTO 100

SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

August 29, 1946

Captain Stanton, MAC  
Wiesbaden Collecting Point for Art Objects  
Military Government, Wiesbaden  
APO 633, Postmaster New York, NY

Dear Captain,

Mr. Clouth has informed me that you have been kind enough to accept a Gothic Madonna statue for safekeeping, in addition to the three paintings previously accepted by Captain Farmer. I wish to thank you for your kind cooperation which is much appreciated.

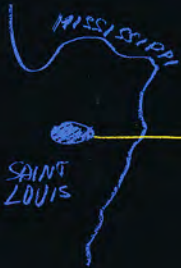
I understand, however, that Mr. Clouth has not been able to obtain a receipt for said statue. I think it would be only correct to issue such receipt, as the statue, as well as the pictures, were voluntarily submitted for safekeeping by my representative. Files in possession of the AIG and myself prove that I am the legal owner, and as such I am entitled to a receipt stating that the statue is in your possession, and that it can be removed for shipment to me, as the owner, whenever such shipment is possible. This was done by your predecessor in the case of the three paintings.

I wonder when shipment can be made. It seems strange that property can be returned to the French owners, for instance, but not to Americans. Any helpful suggestions you may have will be greatly appreciated.

Thanking you again for your kindness and hoping to hear from you, I remain,

Yours very truly,

*F. C. Katzenstein*



When a bear was rolled up  
to the Art Museum recently,  
Perry T. Rathbone, museum director,  
got the surprise of the year.  
Inside the hearse, carefully reclining  
on a cot, was a 52-inch  
16th Century wooden statue  
of the Madonna and Child.  
The story behind this is told  
by Dr. S. C. Katzenstein of Salem, IL,  
an Army medical officer in World War II.  
On reaching Germany,  
his native land,  
he learned his parents had died  
in concentration camps and that the Nazis  
had confiscated his father's art collection.  
A former schoolmate told Dr. Katzenstein  
that three paintings had been sold  
to a collector in Wiesbaden,



and that this statue went to a  
collector in Frankfurt.  
The schoolmate promised to find them  
and ship them to Dr. Katzenstein  
on his return to America.  
They arrived in Salem last summer.  
Convinced that the delicate statue  
might be valuable, and fearing it  
might be damaged in transit,  
Dr. Katzenstein hired a hearse,  
placed the statue on its cot,  
and directed the driver to proceed  
cautiously to St. Louis, 80 miles away,  
while the doctor followed  
in his automobile.  
Saint Louis Star-Times, 1949  
ed. A.G. Bensch

Released on file  
Provision  
Agreement of the Republic  
of the United States of America  
with the Government of the State of  
California  
California, 1949, 100, 100

The Voyage of the Katzenstein Madonna, 2013  
archival pigment print on canvas (2), each 22 x 28 inches

**RENATA STIH**

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Rockefeller Fellows, The Rockefeller Foundation Study and Conference Center, Bellagio, Italy, 2000  
Stih & Schnock live and work in Berlin, Germany

**Works in the Exhibition**

**In Gallery 338**

*The Reichstag?*, 2013  
photocollage, pencil, and chalk on canvas, 12 x 16 feet

*Raft with Reichstag on the Mississippi*, 2013  
mixed media, 19 x 39 inches

*They Couldn't Find the Monument*, 2008–13  
archival pigment print on Photo Rag (12), each 14 ½ x 19 ¼ inches

*Ich Bin Nicht Stiller—I Am Not Stiller*, 2013  
photographs (8), each 19 x 25 inches

*Maps of America*, 2009–13  
mixed media and canvas (8), variable dimensions

*Smoking Emigrants*, 2011–13  
pencil and print on fabric (8), each 37 x 55 inches

**In Gallery 301**

*Liquid Traces*, 2013, video; 20 minutes, looped

**In Gallery 237**

*The Voyage of the Katzenstein Madonna*, 2013  
archival pigment print on canvas (2), each 22 x 28 inches

**In Sculpture Hall**

*We Like America and America Likes Us*, 2013  
cotton on canvas, 5 x 30 feet

**In Gallery 242**

*I Want To Be a Dog in America*, 2013  
archival pigment print on canvas, 47 ¼ x 23 ¾ inches

**In Gallery 245**

*Wild West—Wild East*, 2013  
found objects and mixed media, 19 ½ x 19 ½ inches

*Top and Trouser*, 2013

mixed media on canvas, each 3 x 8 feet

**Selected Solo Exhibitions**

2012  
*Lacan Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, Platform L.E.S. Gallery, New York

2011  
*Who Needs Art, We Need Potatoes*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia

2010  
*Places of Remembrance*, Princeton Museum of Art and Department of German, Princeton, NJ

2008  
*Show Your Collection: Jewish Traces in Munich's Museums*, 16 Munich museums, Department of Culture, City Council, Munich, Germany (catalogue)

2007  
*The City as Text: Jewish Munich*, German Federal Art Foundation, Halle, Germany (map)

2004  
*The Art of Collecting: Flick in Berlin*, New Society for the Arts (NGBK), Berlin, Germany (catalogue)

2003  
*Signs from Berlin: A Project by Stih and Schnock*, The Jewish Museum, New York

2000  
*Immigrant Workers from Braunschweig*, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany

1999  
*View from Outside*, Goethe-Institut, San Francisco, California

1998  
*Invitation at Alexanderplatz*, New Society for the Arts (NGBK), Berlin, Germany

*Who Needs Art, We Need Potatoes*, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany

1997  
*Neues Deutschland/BILD*, Haus der Geschichte, Bonn/Leipzig, Germany

**Selected Public Art Projects**

2012  
*Fontane's Boat*, project proposal, Berlin Brandenburg Airport, Germany

2011  
*Time Islands*, architectural installation, Nelson Mandela School, Berlin, Germany

*Lohsepark*, project proposal, HafenCity, Hamburg, Germany

2005  
*Rosa I, Rosa II, Rosa III*, Rosa Luxemburg memorial project proposal, Senate of Berlin, Germany

2002  
*Heart, Hand, Mouth*, sculptures, Munich-Riem, Germany

1999  
*Hansel and Gretel and the Gold in the Reichsbank*, project proposal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, Germany

1998  
*Canaletto Path*, memorial project proposal, Pirna-Sonnenstein, Germany

1997  
*Vermin*, ceramic installation, Zoological Institute of the Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg, Germany

*Image Spheres*, LED video installation, Technical University Esslingen, Germany

1995  
*Sewing Kit Vending Machine*, memorial project, Hausvogteiplatz, Berlin, Germany

*BUS STOP*, proposal for Holocaust Memorial, Berlin, Germany (timetable brochure)

1993  
*Places of Remembrance*, memorial in Berlin-Schöneberg, Germany (catalogue and map)

**Selected Group Exhibitions**

2012  
*Capital Offense: The End(s) of Capitalism*, Beacon Arts Building, Inglewood, California

2010  
*Krimiseries: Evidence, Narrative and the Forensic Imagination*, Museum London, Ontario, Canada

2007  
*Reality Bites: Making Avant-Garde Art in Post-Wall Germany*, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri

2005  
*Regarding Terror: The RAF Exhibition*, Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany; Neue Galerie Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria

2004  
*Text, Image, Thought: Walter Benjamin and Contemporary Art*, Haus am Waldsee, Berlin, Germany

*The 10 Commandments*, German Hygiene Museum, Dresden, Germany

2002  
*Ctrl [Space]*, ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Germany

2000  
*Germany 1989-99*, Haus der Geschichte, Leipzig, Germany

1999  
*Save the Day!*, Museum of Modern Art (MMK), Frankfurt, Germany

1998  
*Power and Monument: Modern Architecture in Germany 1900-2000*, German Architecture Museum (DAM), Frankfurt am Main, Germany

1997  
*German Images: Art from a Divided Land*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California

1995  
*Burnt Whole: Contemporary Artists Reflect on the Holocaust*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts; Washington Projects for the Arts, Washington, D.C.

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cover: *The Reichstag?*, 2013  
photocollage, pencil, and chalk on canvas, 12 x 16 feet