



with/drawing: a triptych. 2008. Multimedia installation.
Typewriters, handmade paper, horsehair.



with/drawing: a triptych.
Details, above and below.

JULIO FINE ARTS GALLERY

Loyola University Maryland
4501 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21210
Gallery Phone 410 617 2799
www.loyola.edu/gallery

KAREN BALDNER & BJÖRN KRONDORFER

DIALOGUE THROUGH THE ARTS: A JEWISH-GERMAN EXPLORATION

FEBRUARY 29 – APRIL 4, 2012

**Artists Talk / Opening Reception:
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 5 PM – 7 PM**

This special exhibition is a part of the Jerome S. Cardin Lecture event in 2012 sponsored in part by The Center for the Humanities at Loyola University Maryland.

Gallery Hours

Monday through Friday, 11am – 5pm
Sunday, 1pm – 4pm

Gallery will be closed during all University holidays.

Location and Parking

The Julio Fine Arts Gallery is in the College Center directly north of Jenkins lot and Francis X. Knott Humanities Center.

Paid parking is available in Jenkins lot on Bunn Drive;

free parking is available on Cold Spring Lane after 6pm.

Cover image: *Who am I in your presence | Wer bin ich in deiner Gegenwart*, 2003. Multimedia installation. Plexi panel, horsehair, photo transfer, map, mirror.

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Re-imaginings Across the Abyss: Jewish/German Dialogue through the Arts

Karen Baldner and Björn Krondorfer

HOW DO TWO GERMANS TALK TO EACH OTHER IN A post-Shoah world if they come from a Jewish and a non-Jewish family background? Karen Baldner and Björn Krondorfer explore this question not only through conversations but substantially through the language of the visual arts. Together, they have created works of art that take on the medium of the book, a format rooted in the German and the Jewish traditions. Their book-objects are not only catalysts for the deepening of dialogue, but they also become witnesses of intensely personal and artistic processes. The objects they create invite the audience to participate in the open-ended conversation: In the face of the post-Shoah chasm between their communities of belonging, can we imagine spaces where genuine dialogue takes place?

Karen and Björn have individually explored themes related to the Holocaust for many years. Karen comes from a Jewish-German family persecuted during the Nazi era. She grew up in postwar Germany but today resides as a visual artist in the United States. She works in the media of Artist Books, addressing issues of victimization, empowerment, and identity. She teaches Drawing and Book Arts at Herron School of Art & Design in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Björn comes from a non-Jewish German family, grew up in Germany, and now teaches Religious Studies at St. Mary's College of Maryland. As a scholar, his projects and research revolve around issues of trauma, reconciliation, and the intergenerational transmission of the Holocaust. Karen and Björn met in 1992 at St. Mary's College and since have cultivated a friendship based on respect and inspiration for each other's dedication to addressing the legacy of the Shoah, the impact of the NS-Dictatorship as well as larger issues related to violence.

Collaborating artistically helped to get through the emotional and arduous nature of such difficult dialogues. By anchoring their interactions in material objects, the art that emerges serves as a witness and provides a forum for the engagement with the wider community. Since Karen and Björn live in different parts of the United States and see each other only sporadically, each "witness" has its own special gestation period and location within their dialogical relation.

Books represent best their shared interests, skills, and respective cultural traditions. Books are central to Karen's previous artistic work and to Björn's scholarly endeavors. Personal and collective stories rooted in their families unfold in their work. Though the histories maintain their separate characteristics, the integration of

two different stories into a visual unity produces a blending and morphing effect. For example, The iron-framed structure of "Who Am I In Your Presence / Wer bin ich in deiner Gegenwart?" facilitates a simultaneous merging and separateness, which can be manipulated by the viewer through moving the plexiglass panels. The blending and crossing over of the visual is, in actuality, a reflection of the nature of their dialogue. Karen and Björn write: "We have taken the risk to listen to each other carefully, moving beyond the inherited demarcations of victim and perpetrator. There is no longer a fixed and predetermined position from which we speak."

They continue: "At times, the process of materializing our conversations, especially when they touch sore spots in our Jewish / German relations, has helped us to move back from our emotionality. By stepping back, we are able to negotiate the differences through the artistic choices we've made. we re-embrace the issues aesthetically and intellectually. By looking at the art-object - our material witness - our conversation seems to look back at us, as if asking whether we have accomplished the level of honesty we are striving for."

Through this process, a theme or concern may suddenly be accessible that previously fell through the cracks of interpersonal tension. In this sense, the artistic-visual process can act as a mediator and facilitator of cultural and inherited antagonisms.

"The deeper we enter the dialogue process, the more we become aware that our initial questions may remain unanswered - at least in our generation," Karen and Björn cautiously assert. It is perhaps the nature of engaging their two different sides that reveals a haunted and unresolved space. "It may be prudent to view our dialogue not as a place to find solutions but as a forum where cultural secrets can be exchanged, personal memories appreciated, the past accounted for, and the present re-imagined."

Karen Baldner is a professor of book arts and drawing at the Herron School of Art & Design at Indiana University in Indianapolis. Her work has been supported by grants from Fulbright and the National Endowment for the Arts as well as state grants from Arkansas and Indiana. She shows extensively throughout the United States and Europe and her work is included in a number of public and private collections in the U.S., Canada, and Germany.

Björn Krondorfer, Ph.D., a professor of religious studies and chair of philosophy and religious studies at St. Mary's College of Maryland, is an expert in the Western religious traditions with particular interests in cultural, Holocaust, and gender studies. After studying theology at several German universities, Krondorfer earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in Religious Studies at Temple University.



heimat. 2005. Limited edition book.
Handmade pigmented paper, horse hair, wire, European maps.



heimat.
Details, above and below.