

# Visual artist Markus Schinwald blurs line between bodies, objects

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Markus Schinwald's work is on view at CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts

Austrian visual artist **Markus Schinwald** likes to take classical 19th century portraits bought at auction and make them his own by subtracting from the paintings and adding his own provocative or disturbing twist. Schinwald also takes other classical objects, including Chippendale-style table legs, and turns them into sculptural forms that appear to climb walls, wrap around poles, stretch and bend.

The 41-year-old artist, who also has a history of turning the blank slate of a gallery into a personalized space that blurs the line between bodies and objects and makes the visitor a part of the art, has his first major museum commission in the United States at the **CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts**. The site-specific show is presented in partnership with the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** and is part of the museum's "New Work" series featuring works by innovative contemporary artists.

"Working with the artist over the past year to develop this exhibition and site-specific installation has been an inspiration," said **Anthony Huberman**, curator and director of the institute. "Schinwald's work and ideas have the ability to disrupt some of our most commonly held assumptions about the way the body coexists with objects. I look forward to an active dialogue about the work with our visitors."

**Jenny Gheith**, assistant curator of painting and sculpture at SFMOMA, called Schinwald's works "uncanny and psychologically stirring." She sees the artist's structures as unfolding "like a body with artificial limbs and joints, connecting sculptures that exude anthropomorphic qualities and paintings of figures whose personalities are amplified by the braces and masks joined to their skin."

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“There is a clear sense of metamorphosis, manipulation and even deviance throughout as constraint is positioned against agency and inhibition leads to self-determined character development.”

Schinwald, who visited San Francisco for the opening of the exhibit in August, works in various media, from sculpture and painting to film and clothing. His paintings have elements of fellow Austrian artist **Gottfried Helnwein**, who makes innocent images disturbing. Schinwald, who both manipulates and decorates, adds in such things as surgical masks, straitjackets, neck braces, orthodontic apparatuses or nose piercings to his 19th century paintings.

He also is fascinated by prostheses and the idea of a correction, or joining of two disparate parts, to create something new.

“I’m not trying to rob people of their personalities,” Schinwald says, “but to give objects personalities.”

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#### **If you go**

**Markus Schinwald:** Noon-7 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, until 5 p.m. Saturday. Through Dec. 13. Wattis Institute, 360 Kansas St., S.F. [www.wattis.org](http://www.wattis.org).