

Artist Markus Schinwald's "Art Zombies" on View at the CCA Wattis Institute

Posted By Emily Wilson on Tue, Sep 16, 2014 at 10:04 AM



Photo by Johnna Arnold

Markus Schinwald work at the Wattis Institute

Austrian artist Markus Schinwald likes to start with an already created work and add on. For example, in his first major U.S. show at the **CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts**, he has retooled Chippendale-style table legs, making them into sculptures that crawl up the walls or wrap around bronze poles. He also buys 19th century paintings and adds things to them – jewelry, braces, head coverings or chains.

“I thought, ‘Why should I do them from scratch if they already exist?’” he says. “It’s always been an issue in art in some way. Many of my colleagues are dealing with a history from not so long ago, but I like the idea of using old paintings and bringing them back to life in a way. Sort of like art zombies.”

Schinwald says he thought of adding prosthesis to his art when he studied fashion at age 14.

“I was interested in architectural clothing – corsets, high heels, or a tight belt– accessories that don’t cover the body but give it a kind of structure,” he says. “I did work with a Russian dance group, and in rehearsal, they all looked miserable. I made very simple prosthesis with a chain with two hooks into the lips, so from there they smiled. It was delegating the smile to an object.”

The show at the Wattis Institute, presented in partnership with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art as part of their **On the Go program**, is site specific. Along with altering his artwork, Schinwald alters where it's shown, covering the walls in soft material, for example, or using poles and openings at odd angles to divide the space. Since his paintings can look conservative and traditional, Schinwald says he wants to make sure they're not just hanging on a plain white wall. The exhibit at the Wattis Institute looks exactly how he planned it on the model, he adds.



Photo by Drew Altizer

Schinwald says he doesn't think of his art as disrupting – as some have described it – but rather fragmenting.

The artist and his wife Ginger Schinwald at the Wattis.

"I want to take something apart and put it together, maybe in kind of the wrong way," he says. "If you break it you have to fix it. Even if you can't."

Markus Schinwald, co-curated by **Anthony Huberman**, director of the CCA Wattis Institute, and **Jenny Gheith**, assistant curator of painting and sculpture at SFMOMA, will be at the Wattis Institute (360 Kansas) through December 13. Hours are Tuesday–Friday noon–7 p.m., and Saturday noon–5 p.m. Admission is free.