

# »Things trouvé«

Gabriel Braun • Silke Briel • Valérie Favre • Pius Fox  
Peter K. Koch • Lindsay Lawson • Tula Plumi • Hendrik Silbermann  
Jorinde Voigt • Michaela Zimmer • Markus Zimmermann

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»Without things we would stop talking.«

Lorraine Daston, Historian

For most people the first important object in life is a teddy bear. Even very small children give meaning to a cuddly toy, when they begin to break away from their mother. Psychoanalysts call this first important object »Übergangsobjekt«. Later on in life things don't lose their importance for us. We are always surrounded by them. Most professions rely on objects, they enable us to fulfill our work. Other objects have a sentimental value, we keep them as mementos, reminders or as source of comfort.

In European Art History objects were important especially for the tradition of baroque still lifes. They were also part of renaissance portraits and received great interest from 20th century surrealists. In old paintings objects give us information about the portrayed person's profession and status. The surrealists kept small collections of obscure things out of curiosity and for inspiration. Knowing that objects played an important role for artists in the past we became curious about today's artists hidden objects. Therefore we've asked ten international artists, all based in Berlin, about their most important object and its significance for making art. We put together a collection of very different things. Their diversity is made visible in the documentation »Things trouvé«.

The painter **Pius Fox** (born 1983, West-Berlin) keeps a stone as a souvenir from a holiday in France. The stone has a striking surface with a rocky basis and golden cubes. With its opposite parts it became a symbol of two conflicting powers for him, like chaos and order. The stone was once stolen but he got a new one as a gift. Besides its history, Fox keeps it as a piece of reflection about abstract art. **Gabriel Braun** (born 1982, East-Berlin)

has chosen a self made template he used for a sculpture. He keeps the template on his studio wall. Renaissance painters like Hans Holbein used to portray merchants and scholars with their belongings or tools. An architect for example was painted with his ruler and a template in the back. »In old times«, Braun says, »templates functioned as a form data storage«. Knowledge was kept within a template. »When you put them on a wall it's almost comparable to a library,« he says. **Michaela Zimmer** (born 1964, West-Berlin) collects bits and pieces of dried paint from her paint bucket. She always keeps them in her studio. When reflecting on her work, she enjoys looking and touching the dried paint. »It gives me a complete different notion of paint, of color, of structure. It is very soothing in a way«, she says. Besides the dried paint, Zimmer doesn't keep many things. »Loosing is a good process,« she says. »Even if you think, I don't want to lose it.« For Zimmer an object embodies a certain energy. »But this energy can also be built around other things,« she says. **Jorinde Voigt** (born 1977, Frankfurt am Main) keeps a bottle of laurel scent she found in a shop in Brussels in 2008. When Voigt moves to a new studio, the scent is the first thing she brings to the new place. »Smells are hard to handle. They distract me.« Voigt says. »I love the laurel scent, because it changes my mood and brings everything in a certain condition of clearness and joy.« When she works, it helps to organize her perception. **Peter K. Koch** (born 1967, Cologne) shows an old paper cutter. Since Koch has had it for almost 15 years it's covered with dirt and residues from paint. »I am always surrounded by tools«, he says. »A paper cutter is a very small tool, but I use it almost every day.« As an often used tool it's also an object for reflecting Koch's work. »A knife can separate things, but I mostly use it to transform a surface into

space.« A process very important for his often three-dimensional artwork, which shimmer between painting and sculpture. **Tula Plumi** (born 1980, Herakleion) keeps a pair of scissors. Meant to cut paper she improved the design for cutting metal by adding clothes pegs and wool to it. »I keep nothing,« Plumi says. «If I don't use it, there is no reason to keep it.» But her object is also a reminder of a Sunday, when her former tool broke and because all shops were closed, she made the pair of scissors herself to continue her work. **Hendrik Silbermann's** (born 1966, Dresden) object is a bird of prey. It's a reminder of an installation he did twenty years ago. For Silbermann the bird embodies the capacity to look behind the horizon and it became a symbol for his idea of being an artist. «Art«, he says, «is to look behind the horizon like a bird.» **Valérie Favre** (born 1959, Evillard) keeps black notebooks, which she always carries around. Favre takes notes on politics, writes down her dreams or glues collages. The notes become bridges between her ideas and art work. Besides the notebooks, she doesn't keep many things. What would happen, if she loses the books? »It would be very sad, voilà.«, she says. «But not to be attached to things, helps you stay awake!» **Silke Briel** (born 1982, Koblenz) has chosen a magnifying glass for the interview. As a child and youngster she dealt with serious headaches combined with an ability to see things very closely. Even though the headaches were painful, she enjoyed the magnifying glass effect. But as soon as she was told the name of her condition, it's called Alice in Wonderland syndrome, she lost the capacity. Now Briel keeps the magnifying glass as a reminder of her lost ability. **Lindsay Lawson** (born 1982, Biloxi) shows a »smiling rock« she found on the internet. The stone was put on ebay and meant to be sold for 1,000,000 dollars. She kept thinking about the ordinary stone and its fantastic price and started to work with it. She wrote texts, made videos, had a correspondence with its seller. »It has occupied a part of my brain for long time,« she says. Even though she never possessed it physically, she dealt with the rock in virtual reality with a lot of her art work.

Most artists interviewed say, they don't stick to the objects material value. Asked, what

happens if they lose the object, all artists said it wouldn't matter much. »Things distract me.« (Gabriel Braun) »I am not attached to them.« (Valérie Favre.) »I keep nothing.« (Tula Plumi). »It would be very sad, but it is just a thing!« (Hendrik Silbermann) Obviously the value of an object is not within its material. Also monetary values don't matter. Even if an object may be old or cheap, it still can help to create an image. Objects bring bring back a certain feeling or a story. But they create not just an image of past experiences, but also images of how one wants to see themselves. Objects make us talk and reflect about ourselves.

As well as other professions, artists evidently need tools. But in contrast to most other professions artists often have to build their own working tools, in default of finding what they need in a store. They create new working instruments or they transform ordinary objects in tools - often an improvement. The most extreme form of transforming is done by **Markus Zimmermann** (born 1978, Hannover) with his performance »Me and You«. Zimmermann destroys private objects he kept for a long time. »It is customary among actors to share small presents before a premiere. These things are reminders of the time spent together while rehearsing. The objects tell happy and sad stories.«, Zimmermann says. He has collected such mementos in the course of his life. Some objects tell remarkable stories, others ones are banal. During the exhibition »Things trouvé« he tells the visitors in private his personal story regarding one by the visitor chosen object. After the story is told, he destroys it.

Zimmermann's approach is not only an act of destruction, it also can be meant as a depiction of breaking free. A collection of things can be a comfort as well as a burden. It can be a weight in its physical appearance (one may need a lot of space to keep objects) as well as in its sentimental value.

Zimmermann's performance offers also a bewildering intimacy. He shares his memories with a unknown person. The visitor becomes an accomplice, a witness and a carrier of remembrances.

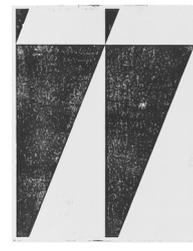
Rebecca Hoffmann



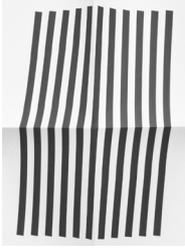
**Hendrik Silbermann**  
Untitled, 1999  
Mixed media  
10 x 15 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Pius Fox**  
Untitled, 2014  
Oil on canvas,  
32 x 24 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



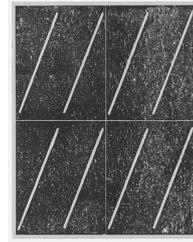
**Gabriel Braun**  
Untitled, 2016  
Woodcut print on  
colored paper  
26 x 33,5 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Peter K Koch**  
Untitled, 2016  
Inkjet on adhesive paper  
70 x 50 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Silke Briel**  
›A\_SB\_2‹, 2016  
Inkjet on paper  
20 x 30 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Gabriel Braun**  
Untitled, 2016  
Woodcut print on  
colored paper  
26 x 33,5 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Michaela Zimmer**  
›dimensions variable 01‹  
Acrylic, lacquer, spraypaint,  
PE film, straps,  
ca. 60 x 110 x 10 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Silke Briel**  
›A\_SB\_1‹, 2016  
Acryl and inkjet on  
transparency  
20 x 30 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Gabriel Braun**  
Untitled, 2016  
Woodcut print on  
colored paper  
26 x 33,5 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Pius Fox**  
Untitled, 2016  
Pigment print on barite paper  
42 x 29,7 cm  
Courtesy by the artist



**Tula Plumi**  
›Fingerpocket‹, 2016  
Canvas and painted steel  
50 x 50 cm  
Courtesy by the artist