

For Immediate Release

Monica Sheets Explores Civic Participation and History in New Exhibition

The exhibition “Das Fundbuero -- Civics Lessons” asks visitors to reflect on their own relationships to democracy and citizenship as they explore an archive of objects from East Germany and the U.S.

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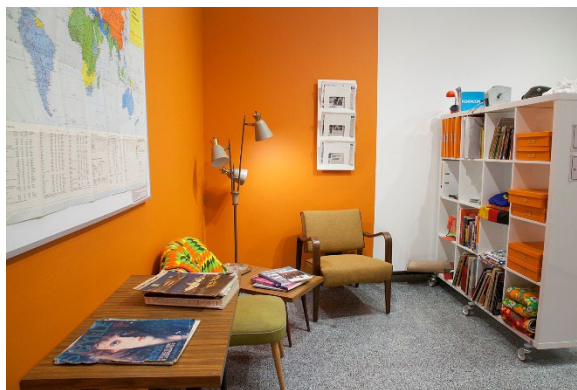
MINNEAPOLIS— The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) has announced “Das Fundbuero -- Civics Lessons,” an interactive exhibition by artist Monica Sheets that explores civic participation and the effects of history on the present. Sheets asks visitors to reflect on their own relationships to democracy and citizenship as they peruse an archive of interviews, documents and objects from East Germany and the United States. Presented as part of the Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program (MAEP), the exhibition will be on view November 19, 2022–February 26, 2023, in Mia’s U.S. Bank Gallery.

Sheets began *Das Fundbuero*, or the Lost and Found Office, in 2007 and has spent 15 years creating a dynamic archive of East German history and a platform for viewers to share their experiences. In this iteration at Mia, she draws parallels between the United States and East Germany by bringing together the archive, project documentation, and her own works that reflect on them both. Upon entering the gallery, visitors will be immersed in an atmosphere that melds office, archive, and living room. They will first encounter two sets of encyclopedias from 1968: one from East Germany and one from the United States, with selected entries from each highlighting official perspectives on the other nation and shared events, such as the Olympic Games. These official narratives create a frame for the personal perspectives that follow.

As visitors move throughout the space, they will find opposing archival displays and artworks that reflect the tension between the individual and the collective—a conflict that underpins both cultures. This exhibition invites viewers to become researchers, interrogating their own assumptions about citizenship, democracy and their relationships to U.S. institutions. In addition to browsing the encyclopedias, visitors are invited to handle and study other objects in the archive, including:

- Transcribed audio interviews with project participants
- Donated artifacts including vinyl LPs, books, and clothing items such as a youth-festival scarf and neckties
- A set of rolodexes and files that catalogue connections between East Germany and the United States
- Slides depicting everyday life in East Germany

“This installation originated from my questioning of ideas of citizenship and the political and economic systems that produce them,” Sheets said. “In eastern Germany, the political and economic changes of the 1990s created a break in their national narrative that generated a space for reflection and questioning of national systems and histories. A similar period of reflection is happening in the U.S. This exhibition brings



Installation view of Monica Sheet's *Das Fundbuero -- 1000 Little Things*, 2016 at Watkins Gallery, Winona State University, Winona, MN. Photography by Roger Boulay.

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the archive to a new audience at a time when issues of democracy and economic justice—core topics of *Das Fundbuero*—are at the forefront of public discussion.”

“Das Fundbuero -- Civics Lessons” is part of the MAEP, Mia’s curatorial program dedicated to exhibiting and supporting artists living and working in Minnesota. Founded in 1975 as a yearlong partnership between the museum and regional artists, it has grown into a unique, ongoing program. Generous support for MAEP is provided by the McKnight Foundation, with additional support provided by RBC Wealth Management.

About Monica Sheets

Artist Monica Sheets creates spaces for dialogue and engagement that explore topics such as urban development, economics and civics. Sheets was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio, and the experience of growing up in the American Rust Belt influenced her desire to connect with audiences who might not typically visit galleries and museums. Her work has been exhibited or on public display at Art Center Waco, Tex.; Art Shanty Projects, Minneapolis; Chevy Commons, Flint, Mich.; Claypool-Young Art Gallery, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky.; Galerie im Malzhaus, Kunstverein Plauen-Vogtland, Germany; Marke.6, Weimar, Germany; Society for Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh; Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Leipzig, Germany; and Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis. She has received the Blade of Grass Fellowship for Socially Engaged Art (2019); a Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant (2005, 2015, 2017); support funds from the Cultural Foundation of the Free State of Saxony (2011); a Santo Foundation Individual Artist Grant (2009); and a Jerome Foundation Fellowship for Emerging Artists (2005/2006). Sheets holds an MFA from the Bauhaus-University Weimar, Germany, and a BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art.

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About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

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