

# SOLDES

David Muenzer  
“Twin Study”

ON VIEW

October 12, 2024 –  
November 23, 2024

EXHIBITION OPENING

Saturday October 12th,  
5–8pm

## *For Immediate Release*

*Chaque personne a été un peuple pour moi.  
Each person was, for me, an entire people.  
Maurice Blanchot, La folie du jour*

David Muenzer’s exhibition “Twin Study” presents a history that has been pulled from the public record back into the domain of the personal. Here, commissioned reportage becomes familial scrap, merging with newspapers that once pretended to give a sense of continuity to human interest stories and advertisements, scores of organized sports, more advertisements, and the war that underwrites them.

Amidst this amassment of artifacts, the question of heritability presents itself. What is there to inherit, from what distance does it come to us, and from what depths of the past does it emerge? Most commonly heritability refers to genetic continuity, a matter of DNA in the narrow definition of family life as a biological matrix. Here, as everywhere the immutable laws of nature are invoked, we find a quotient of social code in the genetic sequence. This is the value of social anthropology for the artist. In the *Bilateral Cross-Cousin Marriage*, for instance, Muenzer has taken a kinship diagram from that field and transformed it into a steel three-dimensional form. In its current state it looks like a late-modernist sculpture (those parodied by Marcel Broodthaers come to mind: “Un cube, une sphere, une pyramide. cylindre.”). From this model the artist has integrated an Eames wire chair from the same era, now gold enamel.

Before we are allowed to accept this chair as a matter of good taste, as an exemplary piece of timeworn design, we recognize the same piece of furniture in *Ann Arbor Wedding*, a drawing in red colored pencil, which depicts

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several men gathered in a living room in the university town of Ann Arbor, Michigan. They are performing the Nikah, one in a series of ceremonies that make up an Islamic wedding. At its center, an officiator, wearing a Jinnah cap, sits on an Eames wire chair. Beneath the traditional headwear, we notice that the men’s heads—long before we see the chair—are globes. These heads are not just globular in the way that some over-round parodies of the human skull often are drawn, but rather appear as spheroid cartographic instruments, subdivided by longitudinal and latitudinal lines. This creates an absurd air that permeates an otherwise reverent scene. While Muenzer often works in this mode of figural intervention, which recalls previous celestial heads in artworks of fantasy and satire, by artists such as Grandville or later Méliès, here the globe takes on heightened significance. It marks the moment at which the individual subject must appear as a totally inscribed externality, a dimensional map of a distant territory of which he serves as a representative example. In the newspaper article that serves as the scenography for Muenzer’s drawing, the voice of the article reads like an ethnographic adventure: it marks each body it describes with otherness; it appends to each name, including Sekandar, the artist’s maternal grandfather’s name, additional place-names and loan-words.

In the case of *Ann Arbor Wedding*, we cannot tell the extent to which the insouciance of the figures in these drawings is entirely the invention of the artist. The photographs included in the original newspaper article have been elided or wholly removed in both works at the center of Muenzer’s exhibition. The first, titled *Biyer Goyna (Anwar Dil Places a Wedding Ring on the Finger of His Wife Afiya 1961)* is a gold leafed paper relief sculpture, based on Muenzer’s mother’s bridal jewelry and the interior architecture of the Ann Arbor wedding venue, with absences where the figures would inhabit those spaces.

The second work, a UV-print on steel, gives the exhibition its title. *Twin Study* consists of two nestled clippings from the Ann Arbor News from the years 1960 and 1961. It reproduces these articles in an ever-diminishing and interlocking scale that evokes the optical effect of *mise en abyme*, which emerges when two mirrors duplicate their reflections into an infinite recess. The link between these two otherwise disconnected articles is the logic of the indissoluble bond between self and other. According to the article about the wedding of Muenzer’s grandfather, the groom may first see his bride only in the mirror. The grandchildren of another couple in Ann Arbor, so the newspaper relates in the second article, come in uncanny sets of three identical twins. In both instances—that of consecrated love and of multiple duplicate grandchildren—person becomes plural in a manner at

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odds with the *principium individuationis* that, everywhere else, defines the citizen.

Even when it means obscuring family traits Muenzer’s works trouble the visual order that would confirm what is-and-could-be-no-other. By omitting the photographic sources from the news-story in which Muenzer’s family history is put on view for all to see, the artist leaves open the space for a possible alterity to emerge in the actuality of drawing. The slightly upturned collar of one of the men called upon to witness his grandfather’s wedding, the rendering of the sheepwool fibers of the Jinnah by continuous tone shading of the red pencil upon the tooth of the paper, the raised heel of the central figure—all offer the possibility of a difference that is not equatable to their meaning as representatives of a “foreign” culture. They undulate, they curl against gravity, they tense. An agency that is not equivalent to the logic of caption emerges here—an energy that is anathema to identification. Granted, to have a globe for a head is to signal, like the monad before it, a multitude embodied in the singular. But why should globality scale without resistance or gaiety down to the individual? The question alone already helps us to grasp why “the weight of the world” never quite seems to rest on the shoulders of Muenzer’s figures.

–Jeffrey Stuker

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Born in 1987, David Muenzer lives and works in Los Angeles. He received a BA from Yale University in 2009 and an MFA from University of Southern California in 2014.

Solo exhibitions include “Henge” at Parapet Real Humans, St. Louis (2023), “Proxetics” at Dracula’s Revenge, New York (2022), “Sylvan Plug” at Jan Weenix, Los Angeles (2020) and “Scalar-Daemon” at Reserve Ames, Los Angeles (2016). Notable group shows include “Delusionarium 5” at Night Gallery, Los Angeles (2021), “Portable Documents Formatted for Home Use” at Bel Ami, Los Angeles (2020), and “The Seeld Library” at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2018), curated by Lanka Tattersall.

His work has appeared in Artforum, The New York Times, Frieze, Mousse, Contemporary Art Daily, Flash Art, and 4Columns, among others.

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