

1. **Dressmaker Mannequin and Old Cloth Wig Stand**
(ca. 3.5 min.)
2. **Piles of Papers, Burned**
(ca. 3 min.)
3. **Black Antique Desk and Chair**
(ca. 3 min.)
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(ca. 3 min.)
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(ca. 1 min.)
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(ca. 2.5 min.)
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(ca. 3.5 min.)
11. **The Old Trunk From India (or the States?)**
(ca. 2.5 min.)
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(ca. 3 min.)
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(ca. 1.5 Min.)

1. Dressmaker Mannequin and Old Cloth Wig Stand:

I found you, mannequin, in a second-hand store during my 2nd year of art school. You were a really cool, old one with several articulated panels that could be adjusted. Your panels were padded and covered with a light-brown fabric, which was torn in places. The metal stand and the knob at the top of you, as well as the metal structure at the bottom (just below where your ‘hips’ would be – the padded panels stopped there and there were just metal strips) – these parts were painted black. I remember that there was a patent number on you and the name of the company that had manufactured you, but I don’t remember what it was. I hadn’t bought you because you were a valuable antique (which you turned out to be), but rather because I felt you had a presence, an aura something like the objects and figures in a de Chirico painting – something between surrealist and strange on the one hand, and quiet and even sort of friendly on the other hand. You inspired me somehow, and I did several sketches, paintings and even a sculpture based on you.

In my apartment, you would just sort of “be there.” Now and then I’d use you to display a costume I’d made or even use you to help make costumes, so that in this way, you managed to be my companion for many years, until I moved to Germany and had to leave you behind, because you were big and heavy, due to your cast-iron stand. But for several years, I kept you on my father’s attic, just in case I moved back to the States. If I were living there now, I know I’d still have you in my possession, and I know that you would be standing in the corner of one of my rooms, or maybe in my studio. Since I couldn’t afford to ship you to Dresden, I sold you for about \$100 on eBay.

The other object that I’d found at the same point in my art studies and which had also inspired several earlier works was a cloth wig stand – you had a similar “aura” about you (surrealist yet quiet) to me. You weren’t really all that big, and now I regret having given you away. Why did I? You didn’t fit in the suitcase on that trip, and I was supposed to clear out everything – and I suppose I thought that it was silly to keep such a clunky thing like you, just because I like how you look. But now when I think about it, I miss you.

In our living room, I have a little painting (still life) with the wig stand and another of the dressmaker mannequin (close-up of the torso). I was never a very good painter, but these are two very humble little paintings which I still somehow like.

2. Piles of Papers, Burned:

I got rid of piles and piles of papers that week, when I was sorting through the things I'd left in Dad's attic. I had saved all kinds of handouts and copies that had to do with teaching (drawing, ceramics, design, video, Spanish) and my studies (art history, art theory, etc.). Some things – for example, the Spanish teaching materials – I decided to get rid of because it's highly unlikely that I'll ever teach Spanish again. Whenever I looked closer at you, I remembered all the effort I'd put into you, as well as the fun I'd had, and sometimes it hurt to get rid of you (for example, the "Cuentitos"). I told myself that I could come up with these ideas again if I ever needed to. You were just too much to bring along – a whole army trunk full.

After having burned all of this paper in my Dad's backyard, I had a little sort of panic attack, as I began to worry about possible mistakes I was making, especially in the case of the papers with all of the recipes for glazes I'd developed in the years when I did ceramics. They're all gone now. I only remember some names, like "Barium Matt" and some various terms, like "Cone 04" or "alkaloid," or some of my favorite materials, like "copper" and "vanadium," or some things like "Terra Sigillatta," which is hard to make but nice to use, and sounds good when you say it. On the shelves next to the table in our dining room, I have a couple of little things that I made, using such things as "Terra Sigillatta" and "Barium Matt" – but I wouldn't be able to do it again today, because I threw away all of those papers.

Why? I thought I would probably never do ceramics again – it had been more than 10 years since I'd made anything out of clay. Little did I know that only 6 months later, I'd feel a very strong desire to work with clay again, as I decided to build a little ceramic casket for our baby Raphael. I looked for my ceramic tools, but couldn't find them, though I don't remember having gotten rid of them. They've been missing since the attic-cleaning event.

3. Black Antique Desk and Chair:

I don't remember when Dad gave me this desk and chair, so I can't remember which wife of his it was who had helped to fix you up before giving you to me, though it was probably Pat, his current wife. I'm trying to remember when I got the desk by trying to picture the various places I've lived, and looking for you in each apartment. I know I had you in the Summit Street apartment, but now that I think of it, I had you in Philadelphia, too. Did I already have you in Cleveland? I'm starting to see you in the Murray Hill apartment, where I lived in 1988, though I'm not sure. It's fuzzy. For sure I had you around 1990 in Philadelphia, because I can picture you in the Elkins Park apartment.

Dad and whichever wife it was back then had bought you at an antique store and painted you – both the desk and the chair – black. They'd done a terrific job. I remember that they hadn't painted the insides of the drawers and under the lid (in the top), but that it had been painted by previous owners, a sort of brick-red color, and that they'd glued an old map of the world under the lid (as I write this, I realize that "lid" is not what you call it, but I can't seem to find the right name for this at the moment –). You were a small desk, tall, with a slanted writing surface that could be lifted up to reveal a large compartment for storing papers, pencils, etc. There were, I think, 6 little drawers, 3 on each side, and they had brass knobs that weren't antique but were supposed to look like that.

The chair had a rounded back and spindled legs. Sometimes I did indeed sit and write at the desk, but mostly I just used you as the place to keep the kind of things you keep in a desk, and would write at the kitchen table (the old red one of Gammy's), where I had more room to spread out. When I moved to Germany, I didn't take any furniture with me other than the little shelves for ceramic mugs + bowls + cups + salt n' pepper shakers, and two small filing cabinets. I would have liked to have taken you with me, but you're pretty heavy and would have cost a lot to transport. In the years between my move to Germany and the clearing out of Dad's attic, I kept you there, with most of my journals in the side drawers (especially the ones from around 1990-1993, the time when I wrote so much).

I offered the desk to my sister Dori, who was glad to take you for her boys, though none of them are using you yet, I think. At least I know that you were able to stay in the family.

4. Gammy's Red Table:

It really hurt to have to get rid of this table, but – as with most other furniture – it would have been hard to justify the cost of transport for you. You had been my grandmother's – Gammy's – table, and as long as I've known you, you've been painted red. My grandmother died when I was six years old, so I can't really remember where she used to have the table or what she used you for (I'm pretty sure you weren't the kitchen table, since I can remember a metal table with a pink enamel-like top) – but I always associated you with Gammy. I think you had been in our basement for several years before I was allowed to take you for my first apartment, in my second year of college. Before I moved in, I asked my little sister if she wanted to earn some money by painting you for me – and I paid her something like \$2 for a job that took her several hours. She was 13 years old and did a pretty good job, though we hadn't stripped off the old paint first, which meant that the texture of chips and scratches in the original layer of red paint (Gammy's red, a deep tomato red) were always visible beneath the slightly paler, slightly softer red which I'd given my sister to use.

This red table accompanied me for the next 16 years and played an important role in at least seven different kitchens or dining rooms (now and then you couldn't be used, for example when I lived in apartments that were already furnished – like Nancy's or in Falls Church – or when the room was too small, like my room at Donna's or at Sandi's – but most of the time, you were in use). I especially remember spending a lot of time with you in the Summit Street apartment, where I spent many evenings alone eating, reading and writing – often with a glass of wine, now and then with candles, though that was dangerous because my cat Snick would jump up onto the table, then turn his back to show me that he was "ignoring" me.

When it was finally time to say goodbye to Gammy's table and bring it down from Dad's attic, I gave you to the same little sister who'd painted you twenty-three years earlier. As far as I know, she's got you out in her screened-in room next to the garage, with stuff piled up on top of you.

5. **Little 2nd-Hand Army Trunk:**

I can't remember when or where I bought (or otherwise acquired) this little trunk, though I vaguely remember giving you a coat of brown paint before using you as a coffee table in my first apartment. Did I possibly already have you in my dorm room, the first year of college? I doubt it, since there wasn't much space. You were definitely a useful object, and "served" me for many years in almost all of the apartments I lived in while still in the States. But you were ugly and I felt no emotional attachment to you at all. It was really no trouble getting rid of this thing, and the only reason why I hadn't done so at the time of moving to Germany was the fact that I used you to store all kinds of papers from my studies and previous teaching jobs, etc. (see "Piles of Papers, Burned"). We took you to a charity organization, so that they could sell you in their 2nd-hand store.

6. Toolbox, "All American 20":

At some point during my art studies, I got this big, sturdy steel toolbox – though, since I can't remember buying you, you were likely a gift, and most likely from my father, possibly from my boyfriend at the time (which would have meant that you were something he wanted for himself, as almost all of the presents I got from him were). The toolbox had things I'd needed for my sculpture and 3-D Design classes, such as stone chisels and mallets and files and rasps – as well as the staple gun that I remember also getting as a present from that same artist boyfriend of mine, who then proceeded to use it whenever he wanted, as he did with all of my stuff. In fact, as I'm writing this, it's getting clearer and clearer that I got you, toolbox, from him as well. Anyway, when I finally left him, I was the only one using the tools, and it was helpful to have such a practical toolbox.

I didn't bring you with me when I moved, since you're obviously something that can be bought over here as well, and you are very heavy. In the years since moving to Germany, you had been in a corner in the basement at my Mom's house, collecting dust. I decided to give you to my father and he is going to give you to Dori's boys at some point, probably after clearing out the junk and taking out any tools he might like to have for himself – and certainly putting in other things for the boys to use. But he hasn't done that yet, so you're now in his basement, in his workshop.

When I took you from Mom's, I brought one thing back to Germany with me: the staple gun and staples. It was a bit heavy, but it's a good one (better than the one I'd bought here to use), so I'm sure that the next time I need it, I'll be glad to have it.

7. Various Ceramic Sculptures and Stuff:

A few of the less successful ceramic sculptures of mine had managed to survive the many filters of several rounds of getting rid of things – and though you’re certainly not very amazing, it was never really possible to take a hammer and smash you and put you in the trash. So you ended up in Dad’s attic at some point, along with one or two of my ex-boyfriend’s decorative ceramic vessels of that time (really stupid things, from the time he was so inspired by John and Andrea Gill). I’ve often wondered why I didn’t smash those or just give them away, but it seems to be more effort than I can muster. I’d rather not have anything to do with them anymore. So, these miscellaneous ceramic objects have still managed to survive, though they are no longer in my possession. They’re sort of floating around Dad’s house, and I don’t care anymore. I saw the kids climbing on top of one of the little sculptures of mine (the one with the eyes and the hands and the trout), but I didn’t care, because I think you’re strong enough to take their weight. I’m sure you’ll disappear someday, and that’s ok. You kind of confuse me, anyway, because I can barely remember what I was thinking about when I made you.

My Dad can’t tell the difference between good art and bad, so he just keeps things that I’ve made, just because I made them. I don’t think he likes or even cares about any of them, except for the terrible watercolor (of a barn) I did while in high school. Although I hate it, he likes it – has it framed and displayed proudly. If I were smart, I’d destroy all mediocre art works of mine, just to get them all out of this world – but I’ve only managed to do that now and then, somehow lacking the energy it would take to carry out such an action completely (though I did manage to lighten the load significantly when I cleared out Mom’s and Dad’s attics).

8. **Artwork (Drawings, Paintings) From My Undergraduate Art Studies:**

This stuff had already survived several filters, had been taken along several times, when I moved from Cleveland to Philadelphia to Columbus – until, when I moved to Germany, I left a large portfolio case (kind of like a suitcase, which had a zipper and an over-the-shoulder strap) with all of this early artwork behind. Now, having been asked to get rid of everything that I'd been storing there, I had to make a decision: would I keep any of you, or throw you all away? If I kept some, what criteria would I use to make such decisions (“important phase of my development,” “good,” “realistic,” “I remember when I did this”)? The portfolio case was pretty much trashed after having been in the hot attic for many years – several parts of it (the carrying strap, for example) had simply disintegrated. So I decided to take just a few things which would fit into a tube and be easier to transport. The rest I burned, along with the piles of papers from my studies. Although none of these drawings and especially none of the paintings were really very amazing, it was still sad to let so much of it go up in flames as I did. I actually don't like to think about it now; it makes me feel confused – silly sentimental being that I am.

If it had been easier to transport a whole big portfolio of drawings, would I have done so? Would I still have you if I were living in the States? If I'd had a place to store you, certainly. But that's a luxury I no longer have.

9. **Shadow Box I'd Used as Part of an Artwork:**

Somewhere near the end of my time as a “ceramic artist,” I’d started writing a lot and had wanted a stronger sense of narrative to come through in my work and had started using small ceramic objects I’d made in collage-like works which included other materials (drawings and texts, hair and wax and string and dried fruit, etc.). I’d found you, shadow box, the kind of thing people use to display their Hummel figurines, in a 2nd-hand store and had used you as part of one of these “collage” works. I’d kept you and even had you hanging in my apartment (in 2 or 3 apartments) for several years, because I’d felt a very personal connection to the fetish-like objects and texts and little drawings in your cubbyholes. It wasn’t an amazing artwork; there was something clumsy about it. I don’t remember what I’d called it, though I must have come up with a title for it at some point, since it was shown in an exhibition once (which one? Somehow it was in the Clay Studio, I think). My memory of those years is somewhat fuzzy.

But I remember that when T. and I moved in together for the first time (when I moved into his place), I’d hung this piece on the wall of that little apartment on Dennison Avenue, and he really surprised me once by standing in front of it one day and giving me his critical analysis, telling me what it made him think of. I was surprised that he could “read” so many of my thoughts and feelings in this work that even back then I felt was silly, and it made me love him all the more. When I cleared out Dad’s attic, I brought the little ceramic objects back with me, but I brought the shadow box back to a 2nd-hand store.

10. Old 3/4" U-Matic Videotapes:

After I'd begun doing performance art work, I'd realized that I desperately needed to learn about video as well – since my first experience of having someone document a series of performances I'd done was such a disaster – I hadn't given clear instructions, and the results were miserable, but how could I have given clear instructions when I was myself so clueless? I could borrow video equipment from the university where I was doing my Master's work at the time, but it was a pain in the ass to edit video in the university's media lab – the equipment (1/2" VHS) wasn't great, and everyone and their brother wanted to use it, so it was hard to get enough editing time. I was still several years away from having enough money to buy my own camera and I'd need even more time and money before I could invest in a computer and video-editing software of my own. So I started to produce little "art" videos at a local cable-TV station which was called "Community 21." They had Hi-8 cameras (much better quality than VHS!), but in order to use their editing decks, everything had to be transferred onto these monster-huge "U-Matic" tapes (3/4"). You were the type of tape they'd use for broadcasting as well – and every video I made there was eventually broadcast, though almost always after 11 p.m. at night, since there were occasionally body parts to be seen, and lots of the things – especially the documentation of my performances – would have "confused" the prime-time audience. (As it was, I had to deal with threatening phone calls several times, when viewers felt irritated, angry, or turned on but ashamed about it)

Anyway, in the years of producing videos using Community 21's facilities, I accumulated dozens and dozens of you, clunky tapes, as all raw material had had to be dumped onto you before editing – then I had the edited versions, then the various programs I'd had broadcast (what was the name of my program? I can't remember – something plain and simple and stupid, like "short pieces"). Before getting rid of you, I had the finished works transferred from the U-Matic tapes to Mini-DV, although I still haven't managed to get around to having them transferred to PAL, so I can't show anyone over here, even if I wanted to, which I'm not sure I do.

I left the U-Matic clunkers at the place where I'd had the stuff transferred to Mini-DV. It was a place where I'd worked once as a student, helping with their little in-house television studio, called "Biomedical Communications." I'm not sure what they planned to do with them.

It didn't really hurt to get rid of these things, but it does feel strange that there is so much of my work – nearly everything I did in the States, until 1999 – which has fallen into a "black hole," which hasn't really managed to really be here with me in Germany.

11. The Old Trunk From India (or the States?):

I don't know where this trunk originally came from, but I've been told that you were one that my missionary grandparents, and later my mother, used to use on trips between India and places they traveled to on "furlough" (I don't think that they had anything like vacation, really, but I know that they did travel to Japan and to Egypt once and that they came to the States now and then). My Mom must have used the trunk for her things when she left India to go to the States to study – she told me a story once about you having been mistakenly sent to Berea, KENTUCKY instead of Berea, OHIO, where she was to study. I remember finding this trunk in our attic on Wright Road, when I was a little girl, and I remember discovering an old diary of my Mom's (full of secrets!). I think she also kept drawings from our early childhood in you, though none of this has survived.

The trunk fascinated me, not only because you were really old and looked like a "treasure chest," but because there was a little special compartment in your lid to keep extra special things – and as long as I can remember, I've always loved things like this (especially "secret compartments"). You had a strong smell of sandalwood (almost everything from India smelled that way), a bit musty and dusty as well.

I don't remember when, but at some point, I was able to use the trunk for my own things, and I remember keeping a few little things from my childhood in your "special compartment," while using the rest for books, letters, photos and stories I'd written. You were a true "family heirloom" and I really wasn't happy to have to get rid of you, though at least you were able to stay in the family, my sister Dori took you in (I think she's got you in her living room now, but I'm not sure). I think I brought nearly all of your contents with me back to Germany, though I probably burned a few things here and there, as well. The stuff that was in you was from childhood (very little of that has survived) and my first few years on my own. I think it's possible that this trunk had been even longer at my Dad's (longer than the other stuff) – though I can't quite remember any more.

12. Costumes, Props and “Leftovers” From Performances:

About five years before moving to Germany, I'd begun to work with the medium of performance (during my 2-year MFA study), which meant that I began to design and change spaces (“installation”), sew costumes and make or find the “props” that I needed (most often a combination of found objects and home-made contraptions). Now and then I'd repeat a piece, for example, if I was invited to a performance art festival, and then it was important to not have to re-create everything from scratch each time. So I held onto everything, all of you. But, of course, with time, you began to demand a lot of space, which is fine if you've got a large studio, an attic, basement or garage to keep it in, or if you're not planning to move overseas, as I, as you know, eventually did.

When I moved here in 1999, I saw it as an “experiment,” and so I didn't get rid of everything which I couldn't take with me that first time, but kept some stuff at my Mom's (attic over the garage and a few things – like the toolbox and some of the U-Matic tapes – in her basement) and other stuff at my Dad's. They both asked me – with good reason, of course – to clear the stuff out during my visit in 2006. It was overwhelming to be faced with so many decisions to be made in just a few days, and it became impossible to loll around in each space forever, or to mull over tricky questions like, “Will I ever have a retrospective, where I'd like to show these things?” No time and definitely no space for delusions of grandeur. Anything that could possibly still have a value (like the buckets that didn't have holes drilled in them) was taken to a charity organization, and most of the other stuff was either burned or put out for a special trash collection. Much of you had begun to rot or disintegrate anyway, although I must admit that such decaying homemade kitsch has a special aesthetic charm for me. (Sophie Calle would have liked the “leftovers” – though, on second thought, she wouldn't have, since they weren't hers).

Anyway, you're all gone now: all of the dresses and clothesline/pulley systems and old-maid slips and weird home-made mattresses and skirts made of gloves and odd tools for doing things you'd normally never have to do, like fill balloons with soil.

13. **Folding Chairs From Papa's Fire Department:**

These objects weren't particularly exciting, but they were, of course – as folding chairs usually are – practical. And you had the special bonus of being old and yet quite sturdy and you had a certain aesthetic that I liked: down-to-earth and clunky yet charming. You'd been in our family forever, and I seem to remember your having been in the Brecksville Fire Department, where my grandfather (whom we called "Papa") had been Fire Chief for many years. But that might be fiction; I'm not sure where I got that from. At any rate, you had certainly come from my father's side (things from Mom's side almost always had to do with India and being far away, mysterious – whereas stuff from the Grau family was practical and non-sentimental, of course). I'm tempted to call my Dad to ask him about these chairs again, because I also can't remember what we did with you – did we bring you to his church, for the Youth Center? (Probably not, because you would have clashed with the Rubbermaid stuff they've got there). Did we give you to charity? Or did we find someone who could still use you? (Maybe even Dori, who absorbed quite a lot of my hand-me-downs). Anyway, I didn't and couldn't bring you back to Germany with me, so for me, you're gone now. And that's okay, I guess.