AMERICAN ACADEMY

Twenty Years of Cultivating Relationships across the Atlantic

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Miraculously, It Worked

The Improbable Beginnings of America's First Post-Cold War Institution Abroad

IT ALL STARTED in a back room of the Berlin Kempinski, in 1994. The "cabal" consisted of people like Henry Kissinger, Otto Graf Lambsdorff, Fritz Stern, and Richard von Weizsäcker. And Richard Holbrooke, the American ambassador, without whom the Academy would never have gotten off the ground, in 1998. There is an English word, borrowed from German and Yiddish, for types like him: *Macher*.

The mission they chose to accept was "New Traditions." The last American soldier would soon be gone; Berlin was "whole and free" again. The Academy would add a wholly new layer to the foundation laid down in the Cold War, when the Berlin Brigade stood guard in the divided city. Ideas instead of infantry, and words instead of weapons, so to speak.

Holbrooke, who was about to depart for Washington as the State Department's Director of European Affairs, snagged the first few million for operating expenses and for the magnificent villa on the Wannsee. The building and the park had belonged to the Arnhold family before they were driven out by the Nazis. The new owner nicely symbolized Germany's postwar rebirth as a liberal and inclusive democracy. This was the house that the Nazis had grabbed, giving it to Walther Funk, the economics minister and Reichsbank president of the Third Reich. Now the Hans Arnhold Center would serve a very different mission.

The Academy would bring the best of American culture to Berlin: scholars, writers, poets, directors, conductors – thinkers and doers of outstanding talent and renown. And it would do so without a penny of government largesse. When the German Bundestag offered to chip in a million marks, the board politely declined. This was going to be done the "American way" – as a strictly private venture, in a country where high culture has always been funded by the state, starting with the princes and potentates of pre-Reich Germany. There are no officials, German or American, on the board.

Miraculously, it worked.

Josef Joffe, publisher-editor of *Die Zeit*, is a founding trustee of the American Academy in Berlin. Reprinted from the 2012 edition of this supplement

Genius Loci

How a prescient idea from one of America's **premier strategic thinkers** became reality thanks to the generosity and openness of an eminent banking family with roots in Berlin

WE BEGAN with an idea: to create a permanent American presence in Berlin as the storied Berlin Brigade left the city it had protected throughout the Cold War. Henry Kissinger, Richard von Weizsäcker, and Tom Farmer joined me in announcing the idea, on September 9, 1994, the day after the last American troops left the city. But it was only an idea. No building. No money.

We finally found a building, a large villa on the Wannsee – not *the* Villa on the Wannsee, but a beautiful old building that had, in its lifetime, been taken over by Hitler, ransacked by the Russians, in 1945, and served as the American military recreation center during the Cold War. The German government offered it to us, but it was a run-down mess, unusable.

Then came the miracle moment. We discovered that the villa had been the childhood home of Anna-Maria Kellen, whose father, Hans Arnhold, was one of Germany's leading bankers before the Nazis came to power.

My call on the Kellens at their home in 1996 changed all of our lives. Entering their Park Avenue apartment for the first time, being served those small triangular pieces of pumpernickel laden with smoked salmon, looking at the spectacular art, including a Salvador Dali portrait of Anna-Maria's mother, surrounded by silver-framed family portraits from another continent and another century, I somehow felt at home immediately. Perhaps it was because I too had come from a family background steeped in a *Mitteleuropa* sensibility. I felt as though I was back with my grandparents in Zurich, or my great-grandmother in long-ago summers in Sils Maria. The Kellens had been born in the 1910s, but their values and roots went back much further, into the nineteenth century. Stephen's immense dignity, his ramrod straight back, his perfect manners, his discipline and iron will cloaked in the modesty of an old-world sensibility – all this was quite unforgettable in the modern world. I remember once, in Berlin, the head of the Prussian Historical Society – and you can imagine what that means – said to me, after listening to Stephen and Anna-Maria speaking German, "You know, no one still speaks German the way they do. It is an experience just to listen to them."

Stephen was not modern in any sense of the word. Yet he was always open to new ideas and encouraging of young people whom he well knew lived with values and a style completely different from the one that had been hard-wired into him early in life. And so he and Anna-Maria made the decision to support the American Academy – not just in a small way but with a massive gift that would enable us to rebuild completely the inside of Anna-Maria's childhood home while maintaining its essential character. From that time on, the Kellens and the other descendants of Hans Arnhold have been the central reason for the success of the American Academy in Berlin.

Richard Holbrooke, remembering Stephen Kellen (Berlin, 1914 – New York 2004), from the spring 2004 *Berlin Journal*

WHEN THE LAST U.S. troops left Berlin, in 1994, after serving as democracy's sentinel for nearly half a century, many Germans and Americans wondered how a partnership forged in the days of the Cold War could be sustained for future generations.

In an enlightened attempt to replace those departed soldiers with a new army of scholars, artists, critics, and writers, the American Academy in Berlin was formally inaugurated today as part of a privately funded initiative to bolster American influence in the renascent capital of a reunited Germany.

"We are picking up the torch carried for fifty years by soldiers in a different context," said Henry Kissinger, the German-born immigrant who became U.S. secretary of state and now serves as the Academy's honorary chairman. "If this initiative proves as successful for the next fifty years, the whole world will be better off."

The idea of a great American cultural institution at the heart of Berlin's vibrant intellectual scene was conceived four years ago by then-U.S. ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke, who has midwifed the project between his diplomatic chores as special U.S. envoy in the Balkans and his investment banking activities as vice chairman for Credit Suisse First Boston.

"We wanted to create a living institution, not a monument or a museum," Holbrooke said. "No other country has such unique ties with the United States. We must not let them die out with the wartime generation."

The project assumed greater significance as the U.S. cultural and diplomatic presence in many European countries has been sharply curtailed by budget cuts imposed by the Republican-led Congress. Despite Germany's influence as the continent's most powerful economy, the popular U.S. cultural centers known as Amerika Haus have been shut down in four cities.

The German-American partnership in the postwar era was nurtured by common security threats. But since the demise of the Soviet Union, the two countries have experienced a growing estrangement, as Germany places higher priority on achieving European unity while the United States has shifted its attention to other hot spots around the world.

At the time when Europe's center of gravity is shifting toward Berlin, and Germany is embarking on a new era of political leadership, Holbrooke said that it was in "America's critical national interest" to maintain an influential cultural profile in the sprawling metropolis that once served as the power base of Hitler's Third Reich.

Berlin mayor Eberhard Diepgen, who has led this year's fiftieth-anniversary celebrations of the Allied airlift that ensured the survival of two million Berliners when the Soviet army cut off ground access to the Western sectors, described the Academy as an "intellectual bridge" that will link younger generations with no firsthand understanding of the Cold War connection.

The seed money for the academy was a $3 million donation from the family of the late Hans Arnhold, once a leader of Berlin's financial community and a prominent patron of the 1920s artistic scene. The Academy will occupy the forty-room lakeside mansion in which the Arnhold family lived before seeking refuge in the United States.

Arnhold's daughter and son-in-law, Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen, a prominent couple in New York's cultural and banking community, offered the funding grant, when Berlin's city government provided the family mansion on a rent-free basis. During the military occupation of Berlin, the villa served as a recreation center for the United States Army, before it was turned over to the city.

"This house has always reserved a special place for culture," said Anna-Maria Kellen, after dining in her family home for the first time in 64 years. "It's reassuring to know that its role will be preserved by the influx of so many writers and artists."

The first group of eight fellows arrived early this autumn, headed by playwright Arthur Miller. Others include poet C.K. Williams, writer Robert Kotlowitz, historians Gerald D. Feldman and Brian Ladd, legal scholar Kendall Thomas, drama teacher Gautan Dasgupta, and architectural critic Diana Ketcham.

"This is really a special kind of American presence in Germany, albeit in very concentrated form," said Feldman, a professor on leave from the University of California at Berkeley. "There is a new mutual awareness, and an important part of our role is the impact of our thinking and our work on the Germans."

Holbrooke, who is renowned for his skills at shaking the money-tree for donations in the private sector, said the Academy has raised $12 million so far but is aiming for a permanent endowment of $40 million. He said the Academy requires $2.5 million a year to maintain its operations and that he was determined to use formidable persuasive skills to keep the Academy thriving.

Sounding a cautionary note to recalcitrant donors, Kissinger cited Holbrooke's persistence in brokering peace deals in the Balkans and urged them to reach for their wallets in a gesture of surrender.

"Believe me, you will find it more painful to refuse him than to bow to his wishes."

William Drozdiak, "US Cultural Institute Opens in Berlin," *The Washington Post*, November 7, 1998

THREE YEARS AFTER the war, a Jewish banker who had immigrated to America received a letter from a former acquaintance—and Nazi minister—who sought a degree of absolution from his refugee recipient. Below, a remarkable postwar exchange between two German businessmen:

Gut Tiefenbrunn, January 22, 1948

Dear Herr Arnhold!
By pure chance I happened to mention you recently in a conversation about old times with Privy Councilor Gassner, of Brown Boveri, and learned of your fate. I only wish today with these lines to say that I happily remember our common work for Allianz. I will not bore you today with news about my circumstances. Before I do that, I first want to know whether you remember me. For, after everything that has happened in these frightful years, it would not be surprising if you have drawn a line under these years that lie in the past. When my friend Otto Jeidels left Germany – I believe in 1937 – I tried to console him with the words, "We will all envy you yet." I would be very happy to hear from you, and am, with best regards, Yours
Dr. Kurt Schmitt

Hans Arnhold's moving reply, obviously typed by himself on a machine without umlauts – itself a commentary on the relationship between the physical and spiritual burdens of even a fortunate refugee – is a monument to the German-Jewish bourgeois culture torn asunder by National Socialism.

New York, March 25, 1948

Dear Herr Dr. Schmitt,
I have just received your friendly letter. I must confess that I was very happy to receive your greetings because they come from a person whom I have always highly valued for his honesty and his strong creative power and his collegiality. I also confess that your letter made me somewhat melancholy, because it demonstrated to me that one still has a false picture over there concerning the situation here and especially concerning the fate of the many refugees.

You are right that I often would like to draw a line under the past, but when one has lived in Germany for fifty years and has had good friends and was attached to the beauty of Germany, then it is just not so simple to draw this line. I was in Europe in 1946- 1947 but I did not step upon German soil because I did not want to see the destroyed country and all the misery. I also do not correspond much, and if I reply extensively to your friendly letter, then it is one of the few exceptions. I say that I am made somewhat melancholy by the remembrance of you. Today we know how much better it perhaps would have been if you had responded with a "yes" instead of with the words "it is too early," when I was commissioned in 1931 to contact you as to whether you would accept the position of Reich Finance Minister. Perhaps Germany would have been spared the fearful years about which you spoke if you had placed yourself at the disposal of the government then instead of only doing so under the Nazi regime in 1934. I know that you did so in the best faith and most complete love of the Fatherland, but it must be said that you made a mistake. Do not take it ill if I write this and add to it that there is no one who has not made mistakes, including myself, and perhaps I would have also made some if I had not been one of the persecuted.

I say that I was also astonished. You quote your words to Dr. Otto Jeidels "we will all envy you some day," and you believe that this day is now at hand. If you mean by that the peace that Dr. Jeidels has found in his quiet grave on the Buergenstock far "from all partisan hate and favor," then you are right. But if you mean the fate of those driven from Germany, then you have a completely false picture. You only hear of the very few who have managed to gain a foothold here or in other parts of the world and believe that you can generalize their fate. Believe me, most of them, strewn over the entire world, fight hard from dawn to dusk for their existence, and one hears daily about new misery on the part of many of those who once happily lived in Germany. I know that things are very, very bad for countless numbers in Germany, and I try myself to help old friends there; but I believe that things still are much worse for the largest portion of the refugees. Not even to mention the unending misery that has overtaken many through the cruel death that was the fate of many relations left behind in Europe. The one thing that the refugees have to be sure of is their freedom of thought, and that is worth a great deal.

> "You are right that I often would like to draw a line under the past, but when one has lived in Germany for fifty years and has had good friends and was attached to the beauty of Germany, then it is just not so simple to draw this line."
>
> **Hans Arnhold**

Forgive me please, dear Herr Dr. Schmitt, if in my reply to your friendly letter I have become detailed and somewhat serious. Please do not consider it an unfriendliness but rather as a discussion which – as I said – I must have sometime with a person from whom I can expect understanding, after I have otherwise corresponded with practically no one. Write to me, if you so interpret my letter as I meant it, and write to me please a bit about yourself, for it interests me. I do not forget your friendly attitude toward me in the years of your official activity.

With friendly greetings, Yours,
Hans Arnhold

Correspondence between Hans Arnhold and Kurt Schmitt was discovered by the late historian **Gerald Feldman,** while researching his book *Allianz and the German Insurance Business, 1933–1945* (2006) as a 1998–99 Berlin Prize Fellow

YOUR HONOR, MAYOR DIEPGEN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Time is a funny thing. I never expected that the house in which I grew up, where I learned my first words and took my first steps, where I first met my dearest friend, my husband, would some day reenter my life. But so it has. Today we have come together to dedicate the American Academy in Berlin, which will be housed in my childhood home, and which will be known as the Hans Arnhold Center, after my father.

Recently, Ambassador Holbrooke asked me whether I thought that my parents would approve of this new identity for our family home. I believe they would be as proud as I am today. Both my parents had great humanitarian ideals. My father in particular was a man of visionary leadership, so it gives me great pleasure to have his memory so appropriately honored.

In our life in America, my husband and I have experienced firsthand America's great generosity of spirit and hospitality. For us, the opening of the American Academy in Berlin is a wonderful and welcome opportunity to enhance the relationship between our adopted country and the city of our birth. I believe that a strong partnership between Americans and Berliners is to the clear benefit of both parties. The American Academy will help us continually nurture and strengthen that partnership.

I spoke a moment ago of how my childhood home was assuming a new identity. In truth, very little of the actual physical features of our home remain. The house looks quite different now, but I remember vividly learning to play hide-and-seek up and down and behind a staircase that no longer exists. Nevertheless, although the appearance of the house may have altered, I believe that the spirit of our home remains intact—the vitality and joy, the love of learning and openness to all that life has to offer. It is my hope, as it is my family's, that this spirit will infuse the American Academy and energize all the young Americans who take up residence here.

Anna-Maria Kellen, at the founding gift ceremony, Rotes Rathaus Wappensaal, Berlin City Hall, June 25, 1997

Architectural drawing for the renovation of Hans Arnhold's Wannsee Villa, 1927-28, by the architects Ernst Lessing and Max Bremer

IT'S NOT ONLY his tone of voice that I miss, the way he answered the phone – "Stephen Kellen" – the way he announced himself whenever he called. It is the way he would always inquire about how one was faring. That alone says so much about his character.

Returning from the recent memorial service in New York, I found myself missing his usual telephone call. "*Seid Ihr gut geflogen?*" he would ask? Then, after a pause, "*Wie ist das Wetter in Berlin?*"

He always wanted to be well-informed and constantly sought to acquire new knowledge, not just about his family but about so many other things.

He loved to listen and to ask questions. "It is amazing what one can experience in one lifetime, if one lives long enough." Whenever he wanted to contemplate something someone had said, he would use the short phrase, in English, "I see . . ." It meant that he intended to return to the given topic soon, and he usually did. I admired his ability to listen, especially in cases when I knew he held a very different opinion.

I was granted the privilege of learning from him for only a few short years, but I have so much to thank him for. He was there whenever I had a question. In the course of our conversations he often used the saying "the devil is in the details" – and then he would proceed to analyze and discuss the whole matter once more, with the greatest precision.

He was a great philanthropist. The range of his interests has always been remarkable. And he did everything with his characteristic modesty.

He loved youth and relished having discussions with young people. Not only was he a good listener, he also knew how to ask highly pointed questions. We were fond of saying of him that knowledge was his hobby horse. And whenever possible, he would try to help young people.

It was one of his traditions when he was in Berlin to visit to his old school, the Französisches Gymnasium, and have a talk with the graduating class. The last time he went, in 2002, the discussion lasted almost three hours. As a result of these exchanges he was able to bring the point of view of young people into his other debates.

After his attack of pneumonia here in Berlin two years ago, I think he got better more rapidly because he so enjoyed being in Berlin. Berlin was his city in Germany – and only Berlin. He would say, "*Es gibt geborene Berliner und Wahl-Berliner. Ich bin beides*" – There are born Berliners and Berliners by choice. I am both!

Nina von Maltzahn, a founding trustee of the American Academy, is the daughter of Ellen Maria Gorrissen (née Arnhold). From the spring 2004 *Berlin Journal*

"Holbrooke was, in his cast of mind, a realist, but his cast of mind was not his philosophy: this realist – the Democrats' most accomplished Machiavellian – was always returning to first principles, to moral considerations, to the alleviation of human suffering and the spread of political liberty as goals of American statecraft."

Leon Wieseltier, Literary Editor, *The New Republic*

RICHARD HOLBROOKE

was a piece of work. He was a paradoxical man: a remarkably subtle thinker capable of the most egregious lack of subtlety, a brilliant diplomat with one of the least diplomatic temperaments anybody ever encountered. He was always cunning but never malevolent. Mentally, he was sleepless, relentlessly pondering the meanings of even the most trivial events and experiences. His powers of observation were extraordinary, the cognitive advantage of his utter extroversion; and they were matched by his massive powers of analysis, which never shut down. He was a disorderly man with an ordered mind; there was rigorous reflection at the heart of the whirlwind. He was, almost preposterously, in constant motion, a stranger to calm, a bull in search of a china shop; but in his thinking, and in his commitment to his country, he was one of the steadiest men on earth.

The legend of his career, and the flamboyance of his person, has obscured a proper recognition of his commitments. Holbrooke was not only a student of power; he was also a creature of beliefs. What he believed in most of all, I think, was in the ability, and the duty, of the United States, by a variety of means, to better the world. He was, in his cast of mind, a realist, but his cast of mind was not his philosophy: this realist—the Democrats' most accomplished Machiavellian—was always returning to first principles, to moral considerations, to the alleviation of human suffering and the spread of political liberty as goals of American statecraft.

He came away from his early years in Vietnam with lessons but without a syndrome. He was unanguished about the use of American force, when it was morally justified and intelligently applied—which is to say, he was the last of the postwar liberals. Even in his most virulent criticism of what he regarded as America's military mistakes abroad, there was not a trace of the temptation to surrender a high sense of America's role in history. Isolationism disgusted him. He had a natural understanding, it was almost an attribute of his character, of the relationship between diplomacy and force. He had no illusions about the harshness of the world, and therefore about the toughness that is required for the creation of a world less harsh.

His last assignment, the increasingly Sisyphean attempt to bring Afghanistan into the community of open and decent societies, was a bet on this sober and unsentimental optimism. He cared famously about what worked, and he could be brazen in his pragmatism, but Holbrooke's professional life was animated by goals and concepts that no mere pragmatist could share. American interventionism, for him, was not just a policy; it was a way of existing responsibly in the world, the measure of a national (and personal) ideal, the real greatness of a great power.

Leon Wieseltier, excerpt from an obituary in *The New Republic,* December 14, 2010

DEAR KATI,

Richard and I took our impetus from the early Sixties, when, for a moment, hope and possibility seemed conjoined for America. We met in that distillation of disillusionment, which was the Vietnam conflict. Richard had gone there as a foreign-service officer, a so-called provincial reporter, I as consultant to Ambassador Lodge.

We both found that our goals were not fulfillable but also that the values that brought us to Indochina remained valid. I watched a Republic Day parade from the balcony in Richard's apartment together with him – both saddened by the probable futility of what we were watching but committed to draw the lessons which would prevent comparable tragedies.

Richard's life was a testimony to that quest. Though we acted on opposite sides of our political contests I always considered Richard the most talented and the most relevant thinker on his side of the political dividing lines. On all the big issues of the day Richard saw a challenge not an obstacle.

Tales are told about his ambitiousness – many of them true. But he was above all ambitious to do, not to be. So at a moment when America was at a loss about its strategy, Richard and his team were elaborating a direction that has a chance of surviving the military phase. Of course the American Academy in Berlin will stand as a lasting tribute to Richard's vision and consistent application. I contributed my name, Richard the dedication and imagination that turned the Academy into a permanent fixture of transatlantic relations, fulfilling the vision of an American presence in Berlin long after the American troops had left.

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, founding co-chairman of the American Academy, from the spring 2011 *Berlin Journal*

MORE INFO ONLINE

Please visit www.americanacademy.de to register for public events and for a list of our current fellows and distinguished visitors, the fall 2014 program, the alumni database, audio/video archive, and the complete history of the American Academy in Berlin.

From Prose to Politics

Almost every work of cultural significance is an act of thinking **against the grain**, of resisting commonplace forms of thought. By bringing together a unique breadth of disciplines and professions, the American Academy has allowed new ideas to ferment in the soil of another culture. Since opening its doors, in 1998, the Academy has hosted **over 400 fellows and visitors** - from prose writers and poets, to performers and political protagonists

ADAM AND EVE lived together happily for many years. Being blind, Adam never had to see Eve's mustache, or her crooked teeth, or her sagging, veiny breasts. And, being deaf, Eve never had to hear how stupid her husband was, how unreasonable, and arrogant, and downright gross. It was good.

One day, the happy couple learned of an apple that could cure all ignorance. Ignorant to the idea that not all ignorance is bad, they ate of the fruit. Sure enough they acquired absolute knowledge. Eve finally was able to grasp the purpose of suffering (there is no purpose), and Adam got his head around free will (it depends on how you define your terms). They understood jealousy and finitude, multi-variable calculus and laughter at things that aren't funny. Furthermore, they were cured of their blindness and deafness. And cured, too, of their marital facilities.

What, each wondered, have I gotten myself into? First they fought, then they despaired, then they threw some things, then they debated about who owned what. It was bad. They hollered at each other from the opposite sides of the Garden to which they'd exiled each other.

You're ugly!

You're stupid and wicked!

Privately, they prayed to God to give them back their lack of sight and hearing. They prayed, "Let us be like we used to be." But He refused them, or ignored them, or simply never was reached by their prayers, being deaf and blind himself.

Neither Adam nor Eve cared about being right, nor did they care about the over-abundance of beautiful things that could be seen and heard in the world. None of the paintings, none of the books or music, not even nature itself was capable of providing any sustenance, if they didn't first have happiness.

Adam went looking for Eve one night, as the newly named animals had their first dreams. Eve saw him and went to him.

"I'm here," she told him, because his eyes were covered with fig leaves. He reached his hands out in front of him, feeling for her face, her breasts.

She told him, "You are wise and good."

He told her, "You are beautiful." Although she didn't hear him because her ears were stuffed with rolled up fig leaves.

Jonathan Safran Foer, a spring 2007 fellow, "Love Is Blind and Deaf," from "Some Exhibits from the Jewish Museum," in the fall 2003 *Berlin Journal*

THE RIGHT TO religious liberty is widely regarded as a crowning achievement of secular-liberal democracies that guarantees the peaceful coexistence of religiously diverse populations. While all members of a polity are supposed to be protected by the right to religious liberty, religious minorities are understood to be its greatest beneficiaries in the protection it accords them to practice their beliefs free of state intervention and fear of social discrimination. Conventional wisdom has it that religious liberty is a universally valid principle, enshrined in national constitutions and international charters and treaties, whose proper implementation is stymied by such obstacles as religious fundamentalism, cultural norms, and authoritarian states. Insomuch as the Middle East, and the Muslim world in general, are supposed to be afflicted with the ills of fundamentalism and illiberal governments, the salvific promise of religious liberty looms large. In the wake of the "Arab Spring" and the formation of new regimes in a number of Middle Eastern countries, concern for the status of religious minorities is now accompanied by calls for the judicious application of the right to religious liberty modeled on "best practices" of Euro-Atlantic states. European and American diplomatic pressure, along with the human rights charter and the US International Religious Freedom Act, are being brought to bear upon these new regimes as a means of protecting religious minorities of the Middle East. While the concern for the welfare of non-Muslim minorities is important in the face of rising sectarian strife in the region, what is urgently needed however is a critical examination of the contested history of the right to religious liberty in the Middle East. The role Euro-Atlantic powers and international law have played in shaping this history is far from benign and at times has exacerbated – rather than helped – Muslim and non-Muslim relations in the region.

In fact, it is impossible to track the modern career of religious liberty in the Middle East without accounting for the geopolitical interests of Western power, first in its Christian and later in its secular modalities. Key in this alternative genealogy of the right to religious liberty is the figure of the "minority" in Middle Eastern history that has served as a site for the articulation and exercise of Western power. Rather than understand this history as an instrumentalist use of an otherwise noble principle, I want to ask how the very concepts of religious liberty and minority rights-their spaces of problematization-are indebted to this geopolitical history. Far from being a universally valid stable principle, the meaning and practice of religious liberty have shifted historically in the Middle East, often in response to geopolitical struggles, the expansion of modern state power, and local regimes of socio-religious inequality. Rather than treat this history of the Middle East as simply one of aberration from ideal norms, I want to invite the reader to consider how this history unsettles many of the normative claims enfolded in the current advocacy of the right to religious liberty and the universal goods it is supposed to facilitate. In offering these reflections, my intent is neither to promote nor to reject the right to religious liberty but to force us to think about the contradictions and paradoxes that lie at the foundation of this much coveted right.

Saba Mahmood, a spring 2013 fellow, from "The Paradox of Principle," in the fall 2012 *Berlin Journal*

"I am particularly pleased that American Academy is not intended as an academic ivory tower for a small group of elite minds, but has been designed as a vibrant and open meeting place for intellectual and artistic exchange, embedded into the already vivid landscape of cultural institutes in the city. What counts are the traces left behind by the fellows after one or two semesters, their intllectual fingerprints."

Former German Federal President and Founding Academy Co-Chairman **Richard von Weizsäcker,** November 1998

EVER SINCE HER divorce, Denise had been looking for a dining-room table. It shouldn't have been so hard to drive out to Plymouth Meeting and buy a halfway adequate table at Ikea, but when she considered settling for approximately what she wanted, she realized that the sheet of varnished green ping-pong-table particleboard that she'd been using for the last three years was itself approximately what she wanted. It was flat, horizontal, abusable, stable: a table. Of course, she hated it. It was ugly and an affront. It provided a reminder, every time she walked into her dining room, of how provisional her life was. It was like a sore. An ulcer in her home. But it did have the great advantage of already being in her dining room. Even the very, very, very expensive and well-proportioned and lovingly "distressed" old-looking new tables that she saw in Furniture Boutiques for the Extremely Lucky You weren't what she wanted. She would have admired and maybe coveted these tables if she'd seen them in somebody else's house, but she couldn't buy one for her own house. What she really wanted was impossible. She wanted to newly acquire – wanted to fill a longstanding void in her life with – a table that she'd also already owned and been using for years. She couldn't help it: she wanted somebody else's old table. (And – coincidence? – she was in love with a married person who already had two children. A person who was, herself, sort of pre-"distressed.") Denise had almost no free time, and the little shopping she did do was mostly for clothes, but whenever she had a few extra minutes she veered into thrift stores and antique stores, and sometimes, in the latter, she saw a good antique table for $3500 or $6200. She could theoretically halfway afford this, but she was still the skinflint child of her mother, and a little Enidlike voice in her cried out, "I don't want a table that much!" To enjoy a table that expensive and not worry about harming it, you had to have a sense of entitlement. You had to be imbecilically wealthy. There was no way she was getting $6200 worth of anything from a dining table except embarrassment and dread. What she wanted, then, in a manner of speaking, was a table that loved her so much that it came to her. A thrift-store find or a sidewalk find that she could sand down and refinish herself (assuming she had the free time). A 41-year-old substance-dependent divorcee of the furniture world. But, oh, the Seventies crap they sold at the Catholic Charities store! There were almost as many varieties of ugly tables as of ugly human beings. The rare table that did look promising invariably had a horrible defect not immediately apparent to the eye. Like, the veneer had come unglued, or the undergirding was made of sheet metal covered with wood-look contact paper. She'd rather have nothing than the wrong thing. She'd rather keep using her shitty piece of ping-pong table particle board on a trestle of 2x4s. (How often did she even sit in her dining room? How many hours was she even awake at home?) She had fantasies about underpriced antiques, fantasies of renting a truck and driving out to Amish country in Ohio.

One Monday morning she was walking up Twelfth Street and she actually saw the table of her dreams standing on the sidewalk looking abandoned. The table of her dreams consisted of three old weathered planks (fir, she thought) on a weathered, vaguely French Provincial support structure. She was already falling in love when a U-Haul truck came backing down the street to claim the table, which had not, after all, been abandoned.

As she hurried away up Twelfth Street she felt as if she'd fallen hard for a person whom someone else was just about to marry. But, having glimpsed this ideal domestic partner, having registered its existence, she became all the more obsessed with TABLE. She lay awake at night imagining perfect TABLE. She had money to buy TABLE but no time to shop, and if she salvaged something old she wouldn't have time to refinish it, and so she existed in a state of perpetually unrealized desire, because she wanted something she wouldn't get tired of, she wanted something as beautiful as the food she was plating every night, she wanted something that would last her, she wanted a table to be married to, and she seemed radically unable to untangle romantic love from consumer desire, she couldn't begin to sort it out, no matter how she tried.

An unpublished passage from fellow **Jonathan Franzen's** *The Corrections* (2001), published in the spring 2002 *Berlin Journal*

Los Angeles-based artist Mike Kelley, who passed away in 2012, was in Berlin in fall 2007 for the opening of his solo show at Jablonka Galerie. He visited the American Academy in Berlin for an evening discussion with the art critic Michael Kimmelman, of the New York Times. *The below is an excerpt of the interview that was subsequently published in the spring 2008* Berlin Journal.

Kimmelman: You have described our culture as "victim culture." What do you mean?
Kelley: It's a reversal of the old-fashioned idea of the Freudian family romance. Reconstructing yourself as a victim – of, say, satanic child molestation – makes your life exciting. If your everyday life is boring, if your job bores you, what can you say that makes you special? "I was raped by a priest." Victimhood is the new religion. It's the new culture.
Kimmelman: It's also a new form of entertainment.
Kelley: But it is not presented as entertainment. It is presented as a set of social problems.
Kimmelman: How does this relate to our visual culture?
Kelley: It is very much part of our aesthetic. American art has gone in the same direction as the rest of culture because most art now has ceased to have any relation to modernism whatsoever. In fact, I am suddenly becoming an old fashioned artist in the sense that a lot of art now primarily offers some kind of take on mass culture, but generally of a dark sort – Goth culture, heavy metal, etc. It's a kind of second-wave avant-gardism, because all those forms are based on the historical avant-garde but have been filtered through something that isn't art. It has to be filtered through something like a personal trauma that is "of the people."
Kimmelman: You describe instances of the American carnivalesque – school "dress-up days," Halloween, etc. When you speak of these kinds of ritually sanctioned social disobedience it sounds like you're also describing to some extent the condition of art now. It has the veneer of somehow being outside. But it is, in fact, completely sanctioned and safe.
Kelley: Historically art has always functioned as a kind of carnival. Art is the place where you can be wrong, you can do things poorly, you can do things that are inexplicable. But now it's gone into a place where it is overly sanctioned. The traditional avant-garde was confusing because we didn't understand it. Now, it is confusing, but we "get it." The fact that we get it is what makes it cool.
Kimmelman: I wanted to ask you about California and what you think it means in relation to American art. You were from Detroit and went to school in California. You've lived there for twenty years now. You've taught there and you're associated profoundly with the whole Los Angeles school.
Kelley: With four or five other artists. I moved to LA during the period of high conceptualism. The 1970s coincided with a major economic depression. There were no galleries; there were no art stars. Because there was no money. It was the period in which art was really about art.
Kimmelman: That was a very creative moment, and not just in LA, precisely because it wasn't about the marketplace. A lot of artists who were students then describe it as an enormous sense of opportunity. Things didn't cost anything. You could just do what you wanted to. I see that as the reverse of the current moment. There was no pressure. Careers were not made or broken very quickly.
Kelley: When I got to LA, even the notion of California regionalism was over. Conceptualism was an international movement. It could happen anywhere in the world; and this was very freeing. But, at a certain point, I started to think it was a delusion. After all, everybody is from someplace; everybody has a history. My work had to get back to regionalist issues or it would be phony. There is nothing I disagree with more than the international style.

I think this is why the Europeans embraced me. They were being bombarded with international American style not only through mass media and advertising but also in art: pop-art, minimalism, appropriation art. Once I started making work about specific Americanisms, I represented to Europeans a regionalism that they had not seen before in art – a picture of America as being "bad." They embraced me as the sign of "bad America." "Mike Kelly is bad, and we like it!"

I felt a kinship with the artists in the Cologne art scene like Martin Kippenberger and Georg Herald. They were, I felt, trying to do something similar with German culture, trying to use German regionalisms in an ironic, deconstructive way. Well, they were hated. But it was okay for my work to be garbage because I was American. They wanted American garbage. So, I was lucky.

RUSSIA HAS BEEN working, sometimes in deceptively subtle ways, to export Putinism to some of its closer European neighbors. Russian pressure on Ukraine – through gas pipeline blackmail, attempts at electoral manipulation, and widespread use of bribery – is no secret, and perhaps no surprise. After all, the original Orange Revolution was a revolt against a Russian-funded, Russian-selected, Russian-speaking Ukrainian presidential candidate. The same can be said of Georgia's Rose Revolution and Russia's continued attempts to undermine it. Though the opposition in Georgia to Georgian president Saakashvili is genuine, Russian funding for it is no secret either. In addition, Russian meddling in Georgia includes attempts to convert Georgian media into conduits for Russian business interests – the same purpose served by Russian media.

The game can be played in many places. With its new oil and gas money, Russia is interested in buying both journalists and politicians in the EU as well. Russia maintains links with the former Communist party in Hungary and also had strong links with the former Communist party in Poland, until the latter's demise. That party had notably failed to sign an already-negotiated gas deal with Norway in 2001, a failure that continues to have ramifications for Polish economic sovereignty even today. It is worth asking which other political parties in which other European countries now have strong, hidden links to Russia too. When former Chancellor Schröder went to work for Gazprom, he proved without a doubt that German politicians, too, can be influenced by Russian money.

There is also a danger that Russia will export its economic system. Russia's LUKoil already controls refineries in Bulgaria and Romania and has strong ties to Greece and ex-Yugoslavia. As for Gazprom, it now owns the Serbian national oil company – openly purchased with an eye to the political influence it would bring – as well as a third of the Portuguese gas company Galp Energia. It has close ties with the Austrian energy giant OMV and with Ruhrgas in Germany. If all of these were purely economic relationships, we would not need to bother to mention them. But neither Gazprom nor LUKoil are normal capitalist enterprises. Nor are they normal state-owned enterprises. They are profoundly untransparent, deeply political, Kremlin-controlled concerns. And in every single country in which they have invested, the Russian oil and gas monopolies have also asserted political influence, exporting Putinism – that heady mixture of politics and big-oil economics – along with their natural resources.

The West's ability to alter the course of internal events in Russia is admittedly limited, and always has been. But we need not go along with Putinism's central tenets, pretending that Russia is a democracy or that it is a "normal" member of the international community. Russia need not be allowed to chair the Council of Europe – the 46-nation organization charged with extending human rights, promoting democracy, and upholding the rule of law in the whole of Europe. Originally, Russia was allowed to attend G-8 meetings on the muddled theory that this would help it become a democracy. It did not. Why not end the pretense? The point here is that democratic standards should remain democratic standards. World leaders will have plenty of occasions on which to talk to President Medvedev. Why legitimate his authority at the same time?

What we can do is be vigilant about the influence of Russian money in our own countries. Evidence that the Russians are interested in buying politicians and political parties around Europe is growing. Russian-funded think tanks are proliferating. Can Russian interest in Western media be far off? Without encouraging Russian-style paranoia here – or exaggerating Putinism's appeal – we should be aware of what is happening around us.

By suggesting that we can't do much, I'm not suggesting that nothing will change. No country is condemned to repeat its past forever. The Soviet Union did fall apart. Central Europe did join the European Union. Germany is united. I have no doubt that Medvedev will be a different sort of Russian president and that, someday, Putinism may fade out of fashion too. The KGB alumni will eventually retire. According to the ancient Slavic proverb, "Where there is death...there is hope." And besides, the oil may eventually run out.

Anne Applebaum, excerpt from "Putinism: Democracy, the Russian Way," in the spring 2008 *Berlin Journal*

FRIDAY EVENING AT the Villa Salzburg ended, like any gathering, with an atmosphere peppered with small talk, although Fritz Stern, the invited speaker at the second Arnhold Lecture, had distinguished the evening from today's normal run of conversation. It is the difference between the current penchant for middlebrow offerings – "talkshow talk" and "sound-bite speak" – and a more intellectual concept of real conversation between people. Stern reminded the audience of the art of conversation as it was practiced in the coffeehouse circles typified by Arnhold salon in 1933 Dresden. And if only a short while, the art was revived.

Fritz Stern, the German-American historian came to prominence with his book *Gold and Steel* on Bismarck's finance minister, Gerson von Bleichröder. One would be tempted to call Stern a living legend if it did not make him sound so unapproachable. In fact, the 75-year-old academic proved quite the contrary. The mutual respect shown between Stern and Ministerpresident Kurt Biedenkopf took a form a friendly hug and an easy, unforced conversation that dispelled any ideas of compulsory greetings between strangers. Biedenkopf referred to Stern as one of the "important liberals, possessing a profound understanding of mankind: his fallibility and his greatness."

Stern's lecture on the "Contortions of German History" showed just why he is considered a great historian. He compared with consummate ease various periods of German history – not as so many movements but as interwoven "contortions." The expensiveness of this approach to all history was one aspect of his argument. The other was that the adversity which Germany, in particular, experienced, sets it apart.

Stern circumscribed to periods: 1848 to 1914 and 1945 to 1989. He spoke of the "triumph of the apolitical in Germany" and about the abasement of its people – and stressed that this is a notion to be wary of, though it deserves profound consideration. Stern cited the example of the extraordinary courage of the people in Leipzig and other cities when, in 1989, they took to the streets.

The term "patriotism" has lately been used, with reference to German history, to describe the current events in the USA. According to Stern, patriotism can provide people with a sense of unity, a sense of common past. The historian commented that the present global political situation would be seen as initiating a time of great instability, the likes which has not been experienced since the Thirty Years' War.

Questions following the lecture focused on Bismarck, patriotism, and the golden age of German culture. After a lecture that lasted over two hours, the audience excitedly engaged Stern informally with further inquiries and comments. The art historian Professor Paul recapped the value of such evenings: "Meetings such as these are direct and subject-oriented. They are devoid of the media's bias of interpretation and have nothing to do with talk shows, where individuals vie for attention. This is a real forum to discuss real issues."

Heidrun Hannusch, *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* October 22, 2001

"The American Academy in Berlin is one of the city's great cultural treasures, an inexhaustibly vital intellectual agora."

Stephen Greenblatt, John Cogan University Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University

TO SAY THAT the Germans are very insecure about the role of their soldiers in Afghanistan is to state the obvious. No analysis is complete without mention of the fact that the nation is uncomfortable with the use of the Bundeswehr in Kunduz province. Questions are asked as to the purpose the Army is serving. As in America, a state of confusion has arisen regarding the distant war, which from time to time shows its bloody claws but typically remains very abstract.

In this complicated situation, a crucial moral and human dimension of this war is in danger of being forgotten: the plight of many Afghans who have assisted the Bundeswehr as interpreters, as engineers, and in other jobs.

As long as their fate is ignored, there is no just role for Germany in Afghanistan.

Germany is executing in a multi-layered strategy that includes both active defense and the training of Afghan security forces as well as the implementation of a development program, the scope of which has recently doubled to 430 million euros annually. Two German battalions of six hundred are currently combing every district of the Kunduz province for Taliban, to eliminate or to expel them so that the Afghan police can regain control over the territories.

No German strategy, however, can succeed without the help of an entire cadre of Afghan employees. Although there are no official figures, it is estimated that hundreds if not a thousand or more Afghans are working for the Germans. In neighboring Iraq, tens of thousands of Iraqis lost their lives because they had collaborated with the U.S. Army. But the U.S. government closed its eyes. It can be assumed that the German government does not yet have plans to protect their Afghan employees from the Taliban, which make the pursuit of collaborators a priority.

Western countries, especially the Europeans, want to leave Afghanistan. The recent call by American general David Petraeus, who demanded two thousand additional troops from NATO countries, went unheeded. An overwhelming majority of Europeans supports the reduction or complete withdrawal of their troops. In Germany, support is dwindling rapidly: Brandenburg has now refused to participate in the training of Afghan police officers. It will not be the last federal state to withdraw support.

But whatever Germany does – whether it stays in or leaves Afghanistan – it has a moral obligation towards a group of people whose existence is overlooked in shameful fashion in the West. The publication of secret American documents by WikiLeaks has sparked a fierce debate. But this debate rarely touched upon the announcement by the Taliban that they would sift through the documents to find the names of Afghans who had cooperated with NATO forces. Taliban leader Mullah Omar's command, "to capture or kill all Afghan women who help or inform the coalition forces," is also overlooked.

What should be done? Measures must be taken to protect Afghans threatened by the Taliban. Those who can no longer live safely in their country need to be given visas so that they can settle in Germany.

If Germany ever does truly withdraw, it cannot allow the people who risked their lives in the service of the Federal Republic to fend for themselves. Germany's role in Afghanistan may diminish in the coming years, but its moral obligations are growing every day.

Kirk Johnson, founding director of the List Project to Resettle Iraqi Allies, and a fall 2010 fellow, in *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 24, 2010

Interventions

Whether **fostering collaboration** between a choreographer and a law professor, or facilitating artist Jenny Holzer's creation of a light installation inside Mies van der Rohe's iconic Museum Without Walls, the Academy grants American artists and scholars the **time and haven** necessary to leave permanent traces in Berlin's vibrant cultural landscape

As spring 2001 Berlin Prize Fellows, artist Jenny Holzer and poet Henri Cole had many late-night conversations in the library of the Hans Arnhold Center. The following excerpt, from a public conversation, concerns Holzer's site-specific installation in Mies van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie, a work consisting of amber-lighted digital text that runs across the building's ceiling.

Henri Cole: When you undertook the installation at the Neue Nationalgalerie – a project so large in scale, cost, and logistical complexity – what was the most you hoped for?

Jenny Holzer: I began because I wanted to see the artwork. I was afraid of the project immediately because the building was perfect, utterly self-sufficient, and didn't seem to need me at all. After many site visits, I was able to imagine the installation, and I persevered because I wanted to know if I was accurate in my imaginings. I never have a chance to practice my installations, and as a result I don't see my works until they're done. I am happy that the building was generous with me.

Cole: Did you start by writing a text or think in terms of space?

Holzer: In Berlin, I saw the space first. I could tell that the building would be fine once the museum was cleared of temporary walls. After a month of visits, I thought I could do something with the ceiling because – slow student that I am – I'd finally realized that the roof dominates. When I recognized the roof, I thought this was the place where I could join the architect. This was the place he was strongest, the place I could salute him and not be killed. So, I understood something of the space, and then spent much time avoiding the new text. You helped me complete the writing finally. The text was done about five days before it had to go up.

Cole: Since you are not a painter or a sculptor in any traditional sense, it's hard for me to picture you working in a studio. How did you work in Berlin?

Holzer: I was delighted by the invitation to work at the Neue Nationalgalerie, but the pleasure was followed by fear and much walking around the building. Most mornings I would try to write in the peace of the Academy. At my New York farm I practice my habit, which is the addiction to office work. I answer e-mails, put paper in the fax, bother my good staff, organize, find materials, anything other than write. This habit can be useful because my projects require much management. Eventually I return to writing. In Berlin, I went to the museum at least thirty times early on. Later I could revisit the space by closing my eyes. Strangely enough, I can see in 3-D. I'd go somewhere quiet, shut my eyes, patrol the museum again and check my notions. For this project, I lost my nerve and resorted to computer graphics in case I was dead wrong.

Cole: Do you want your texts to make a stronger claim on the viewer than the physical presence of your installations? Or to put it another way, should the viewer be reading or looking first?

Holzer: Sometimes reading can be all-important, and here, in Berlin, I would have guessed that the text would be co-equal with the formal and the material parts of the installation, but I am not certain it is. It is embarrassing for me to talk about my own work, so I squirm now, but in the museum it felt as if something was passing over the skin or acting on the whole body, more than an act of plain reading. So the text was necessary but perhaps subordinate.

Cole: Did you intend for there to be a dialogue between your works at the Neue Nationalgalerie and the Reichstag?

Holzer: At the Reichstag, I was given the politicians' entrance, but I couldn't imagine what to show parliamentarians going to work. I reviewed my writing and also considered composing something new, but then said no. Eventually I thought to present many speeches delivered since the first discussions of whether to construct the Reichstag, all the way through Bonn debates about whether it would be right to return to the building. Once I had that concept, I made a long, thin electronic column with text on four sides. One side faces out so that anyone walking by can see speech. The Reichstag piece is different from the work for the Nationalgalerie. Also, one uses a deeply personal text, while the other is public and political. One is in a place where you expect to find art, and the other is in a place where you don't. In the United States, we would never expect to find contemporary art in the Capitol. Yet both installations contain amber light. I know you often use other colors. Amber came from a process of elimination. Red is too cruel for the museum or the Reichstag. Green or blue would have turned both into fish bowls. White is too ethereal, too pure, but the yellow is warm, somewhat neutral, and rather like fire. Amber seemed the best choice for each place.

Cole: You make very large public installations, but you are not even one percent a public person. Do you find this difficult to reconcile?

Holzer: At the very least it is bizarre, because I would rather never get out from under the bed. Critics sometimes say artists have two or three identifying markers that shape and distinguish their work.

Cole: Do you think your work has a single identifying marker?

Holzer: Though I don't manage to say the unspeakable well enough, finally something is shown, revealed. A way I work is by putting words in public spaces. I have a sense of how to place text in front of people on the street or in much-frequented buildings, and these words may recall events that have to do with me. And here is a marker: that women should not be killed, not be harmed so often.

Cole: You often use high-tech, post-modern, industrial materials associated more with news and advertising. By combining them with your intimate, sometimes erotic, texts, are you being ironic?

Holzer: No, I don't much like irony. The choice of electronics has to do with utility, in part. News appears on electronic displays because people tend to look at moving lights. I put my content in signs, or project with Xenon on buildings, because eyes follow. If I want to address the public, I have to be where people linger, and these media hold people. It is easier to discuss the practical, but yes, the erotic or at least the sensual is present, and I hope irony is not.

Cole: What was your greatest fear in coming back to Berlin to build the Nationalgalerie installation?

Holzer: I was afraid I could not do the subject justice, that I wouldn't be able to speak well enough about what it is for women or for little girls to be assaulted. That was worse than fear of architecture.

The full interview between **Jenny Holzer** and **Henri Cole** first appeared in the summer 2001 *Berlin Journal*

GEORGE SHULTZ, the grand seigneur among American elder statesmen, convened a gathering of 14 influential Germans and Americans in the villa of the American Academy at the Wannsee in late summer 2003. This "7-plus-7" gathering of experts from politics, business, and education took place at the height of transatlantic self-doubt. The exchange of views was frank, and the views were divided. Some participants agreed with Richard Holbrooke's analysis that the situation was more akin to a family quarrel than it was to a divorce. Others referred to the natural disorientation that comes in the wake of a changing world order.

Europe is important. But an improvement in German-American collaboration does not depend on moods, but on results. Our common task is not to get along better with one another, but to join forces in making many of the serious problems of this world more bearable.

Europe's role in the world will depend on its willingness to value results over visions and to address in careful coordination with the United States the most pressing issues of our time. There will be disagreements, but they are surmountable, assuming both sides listen to each other and the governments approach each other with the problem-solving attitude that George Schultz described at the Wannsee.

A pragmatic approach is probably most urgently needed vis-à-vis Iran and the Middle East. America must give diplomacy a chance. But Europeans must also recognize that economic consequences are necessary if diplomacy fails in Iran and the Middle East. As for Israel, Germany is the only European country that is committed and enjoys credibility. Its historical responsibility should lead Germany to deal more forcefully with Iran.

Governments on both sides of the Atlantic seem to be willing to look past the emotional disputes of the past four years. But solutions will not be easy to find. One can distinguish a sense of estrangement in public opinion that exacerbates the negotiation of cultural differences between Europe and America. Europeans need stability and predictability. They are often unsettled by the dramatic steps Americans feel they need to take in order to face a post-September 11 world.

Gary Smith, "Results, Not Visions," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Munich Security Conference Supplement, February 2005

IN LATE SUMMER OF 2004, I was approached by the Deutsche Staatsoper, at the American Academy's encouragement, to write a libretto. Knowing very little about opera and feeling anxious about finishing my novel, I was hesitant. The idea, as it was explained to me, was that one librettist (me) would work with seven composers from seven countries. The same short libretto would be given seven different scores, as a new way of illuminating the choices made by composer. (The libretto would serve as the fixed variable.) So it wasn't a libretto, per se, but one-seventh of a libretto. Which translated, I was promised, into very few pages and hardly any words at all. I didn't say yes. But I didn't say no, either.

As the conversation moved forward with the Staatsoper – one short, long-distance phone call at a time – it started to become clear that one libretto performed seven times would be a drag for anyone who had to watch it. So a full-fledged libretto – a Libretto – would be needed. It could be divided into seven distinct "chapters," each of it could be handled by a different composer. The same ends would be accomplished – one literary vision expressed through seven different musical vehicles – and it would have a fighting chance to be sufferable for an audience. The novel, at that time, was just about done. (Or so I thought.) And the idea of working on something completely unlike anything I'd ever worked on before would be great fun. (Or so I thought.) I said yes.

My thinking about this project changed dramatically over the course of my writing the libretto. Before my visit in Berlin in September 2004, I had thought I might write about speechlessness. It felt like a politically and aesthetically relevant theme. The allegorical potential was so strong, especially in the moment in which the world the found itself, on the eve of the American election. And what better way to give a composer freedom – a necessity for any libretto to "work," but especially given the parameters of this project – than a libretto without words?

During my stay in Berlin, I was forwarded headlines from local papers, with the hope that some might inspire me. Several did.

– Lion Escapes from Zoo; Community Wants Answers.
– Foreign Minister Resigns after Sex Probe.
– Double-Suicide Raises Questions.

There was one, in particular, about trash bins in Berlin. For whatever reason, I was taken with the idea and started writing a libretto about a conference of designers asked to create a more beautiful trash bin for the city. I liked it. It was weird, dark and funny. And I found the idea of German trash to be powerful.

Minister I It has been said that a trash bin could never be beautiful.
We have no choice, Berliners: Our trash bins cannot not be beautiful.
Hostage I What about a trash bin that was transparent?
Minister I Totally absurd, we'd have to see our garbage.
Hostage II What about a trash bin that thanked youwhen you fill it?
Minister II Totally absurd! A talking trash bin!
Hostage III What about a trash bin? What about a trash bin?
What if Berlin had only one trash bin?
Minister I How could all the garbage fit in only one trash bin?
Hostage III What about a very, very, very deep trash bin?
What about a trash bin that went to the earths magma?
With the added bonus of the temperature of the magma.
As the garbage fell it would be incinerated.
Minister I Totally absurd!
Have you no sense of history!
Hostage II What about a trash bin? What about a trash bin?
What about an itsy bitsy microscopic trash bin?
What about a well-hidden trash bin,
a camouflaged trash bin?
What about a trash bin that looked nothing like a trash bin?
A levitating trash bin? An incandescent trash bin?
A trash bin! A trash bin!
My kingdom for a trash bin!

Ahem... In addition to obvious problems of concept and execution, the further I got into it the more I realized it was too narrative, too...closed. I wanted to make something composers could interpret in radically different ways and make their own. Something, like a haiku, that was completely empty of meaning but full of significance.

The more I thought about that problem, the more right speechlessness once again felt. And sadly, it's an idea that has become more relevant with time. So I returned to my original inspiration and set to writing a libretto without words.

Jonathan Safran Foer, from the fall 2005 *Berlin Journal*

IT IS A BEAUTIFUL morning in Germany as Dmitry Muratov wakes up at the Wannsee. He walks across the parquet of a white mansion, past great paintings and great literature, through bright, high-ceilinged rooms, the sound of his footsteps echoing behind him.

Muratov steps out onto the drive. A chauffeur sees him and opens the door of a dark sedan, right rear, where important people sit. An electric gate opens, and Muratov glides through the city; it slips noiselessly past him. Muratov, a Russian, is no tourist. He has a mission; he is here in the name of human rights.

"They believe that the woman who rules Germany can defend freedom in Russia."

Mario Kaiser

Muratov is the editor of the *Novaya Gazeta*, a newspaper that is probably one of the first read in the Kremlin each morning. Its name translates as the "New Newspaper." It is a name that could make a government yearning for the olden days nervous.

Muratov's bravest reporter was Anna Politkovskaya. She wrote about the forgotten war in Chechnya and the forgetfulness of Vladimir Putin when it came to this war and the freedom to write the truth. When she entered the elevator of her Moscow apartment building on October 7, 2006, Anna Politkovskaya was silenced. Four bullets struck her, one in the shoulder, two in the chest. The last went through her temple.

Muratov has come to Berlin because he needs help, help against a government that plays fast and loose with human rights. He wants the help of a government that takes them more seriously. Since Putin became President, fourteen reporters have been murdered in Russia. In only one case has a court convicted a perpetrator. Muratov is looking toward Angela Merkel. He has not forgotten that she asked Putin about the freedom of the press, or that she has received human rights defenders in the German Embassy in Moscow.

Muratov has not come alone. Paul Steiger flew through the night from New York.

Until last May Steiger was managing editor of the *Wall Street Journal*. After the towers fell in New York, on September 11, 2001, he ran the newspaper out of his deputy's apartment because debris had fallen on their editorial offices. Steiger didn't lose a reporter that day. But four months later one disappeared in Pakistan, as he investigated the men behind the terror. His name was Daniel Pearl.

Steiger is now Chairman of the Committee to Protect Journalists, where he works to protect journalists from censorship, intimidation, and death. Muratov puts his arm around him when they meet. It's like a picture from a different Germany: the Russians and the Americans arm in arm in the city that they had occupied because it was the heart of Nazi Oppression. Now they stand in front of the Chancellery because they believe that the woman who rules Germany can defend freedom in Russia.

But Angela Merkel doesn't have the time. Christoph Heusgen, her foreign policy adviser, receives Muratov and Steiger. The Russian cannot say whether his mission will have made a difference once he gets back home. But he carried a message for the chancellor that his government should be reminded of its obligation to observe human rights.

In the evening, Muratov returns to the Villa at the Wannsee, the home of the American Academy. He stands at a podium and reports on the lack of freedom in Russia. A man in the audience is taking notes. He is an envoy of the Russian Embassy. He takes down everything, as a reporter would. Perhaps Muratov's message will reach Moscow faster than he will.

Mario Kaiser, "New Germany," *Der Spiegel*, February 11, 2006

THIS EVENT WAS planned a long time ago," Susan Sontag said just after settling into an armchair in front of at least a hundred guests at the villa of the American Academy on Thursday evening. They had come to hear her read from her novel *In America*, published six months ago. This attempt at a justification would not have been necessary, as most of the attendees appeared to have come not only in order to spend a short period in the intellectual safe-haven of the Wannsee but also to hear Sontag reflect on the state of the American nation.

But their expectations were initially left unfulfilled. "I won't say anything," says Sontag. Harassed day in, day out by inquiries of this kind, Sontag claimed she wasn't suited to play the role of "opinion machine." Then she opened her purse, pulled out a piece of paper and said: "I have just sent this to my friend David Remnick, editor of the *New Yorker*. It is a small, moralizing, unbalanced, exaggerated statement, and not even the half of it will appear on Sunday." And then she went ahead and read it, this first draft of a criticism of American rhetoric after the attacks.

"The unanimity of the sanctimonious, reality-concealing rhetoric spouted by American officials and media commentators in recent days seems, well, unworthy of a mature democracy."

Susan Sontag, *The New Yorker*, September 14, 2001

They were expectedly forthright words that considered the political responses with respect to the "monstrous dose of reality," to which America has been exposed since Tuesday. She argued that the "reality concealing rhetoric" of which leading American politicians avail themselves are unworthy of a democracy. In contrast to messages of grief management and warmongering on seemingly every American television station, Susan Sontag argues for the principle of an enlightened public: "Who can doubt that America is strong? But that's not all America has to be." With that, she stood up, stepped up to a lectern and began to read from her novel, *In America*. It is the story of a Polish actress in the nineteenth century, who – despite her accent – is the biggest star of her time. (...)

Excerpted from **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung**, September 15, 2001

"I personally did not agree with what she said, and I was offended by it. But she was able to say it. And that is the best that America has to offer."

Gahl Hodges Burt, Vice-Chair, American Academy, ZDF Interview, 2005

THE ORIGINAL IDEA for this collaboration came from Gary Smith, the executive director of American Academy in Berlin, an institution with which both Bill Forsythe and I have fairly longstanding connections. Bill and I met first in Berlin and then over the course of a couple of years in lots of other different places: my apartment, various restaurants in New York, but also at Sadler's Wells, in London; and in Berlin, where I saw the work of the company, which I had seen but didn't know as well as I wanted to. During the course of our discussions we talked about our interests, and I told Bill about some of the work that I do in law.

I suppose the best way to describe what my intellectual vocation as a law professor has been, is that I'm interested in the cultural study of law. I'm interested in law as a cultural form, not just as an institution or a social practice for regulating human behavior, but as a social practice that generates meanings (...) So in this series of discussions I had with Forsythe, focused not just on human rights as a body of law, but on human rights as what might be called a discourse on human rights as a language, human rights as a social practice of which law is a part, but which is broader than law. We talked about some ideas that had emerged for me from watching Forsythe's work. (...)

One of the images that I remember quite clearly talking about in our early conversations is an image from Franz Kafka's "The Penal Colony," where sentences that have been imposed on criminals are literally inscribed on their bodies. These conversations about writing produced the basic generative idea of Human Writes (W-R-I-T-E-S) namely, that the dancers would be charged to engage in writing of words, passages of, and indeed, entire articles from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That document has thirty articles which protect a variety of rights, among which are the right to freedom of opinion and expression; [THE RIGHT] to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (Article 19); the right to rest and exercise (Article 24); the right to an education that is directed to "the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Article 26); the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits (Article 27).

So we met with the dance company, which had a two-week run at the time in Zurich (in October of 2005), and we talked about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we talked about the idea of human rights, and we held a kind of mini-seminar for a couple of days. We watched a couple of films, one of which was an extraordinary film called *The Specialist*, Portrait of a Modern Criminal by Eyal Sivan and Rony Brauman, which uses some of the archival footage from the 1963 trial in Jerusalem of Adolf Eichmann and re-inscribes and reconfigures that footage in provocative ways that force the viewer to think about memory, history, and the role of the law and of the trial. In the course of conversations with the dancers, several interesting facts emerged about their own lives and about their personal histories with human rights. One of the dancers from China talked about his experience of being kidnapped from his family and placed in a state-run school for dancers, where he was taught folkloric dance performance. Another dancer, from Spain, talked about living in the Basque region, and about the very particular relationship that that cultural identity entailed for them to the idea of human rights. From this dialogue emerged a set of understandings that many of the dancers had not had before, because they actually had never really talked about what human rights meant in their lives, and for them as individuals and artists.

The dancers were each given a table with white contact paper. They were given a variety of materials: carbon, graphite, pencil, rope, and copies of the Universal Declaration, in several different languages, and they were charged to select an article or a passage of an article that they were, over the course of three or four hours, going to attempt to write on this white contact paper, which had been taped to the aluminum tables. However, for every effort, for every action, for every gesture in which they tried to write a passage from the article, they had to come up with a parallel inhibition, obstacle, or impediment. (...) This was supposed to be hard work, work that I wouldn't say represented but which attempted at some level to enact the difficulty of inscribing human rights, and particularly the difficulty of creating a culture of human rights.

The piece was created in Zurich's Schiffbauhalle, which is just huge, with 54 of these tables. There was no seating, and the audience was invited to roam freely through the space. As you passed a dancer, the dancer might say, "Help me." The dancer might ask you to hold a rope that was tied to her arm and tell you, "Every time I reach for the contact paper with my piece of carbon, I want you to pull on the rope." Or: "I want you to write a letter on my back, and I will try to recreate that letter on the contact paper." Each movement by the dancer, each movement by the audience member, was accompanied by a parallel obstacle, inhibition, difficulty, resistance, as a way of trying concretely to enact the difficulty, the obstacles, the resistances to the creation of a human rights culture.

Kendall Thomas, a 1998 Berlin Prize Fellow, excerpt from his essay "On Human Writes"

Open Society

The American Academy is passionate about bringing ideas into the **public sphere**. Though the organization of on- and off-the-record programs, the Academy's lakeside Hans Arnhold Center has become a favorite **nonpartisan meeting place** for civil society to debate issues of scholarly, ethical, and political significance

IN EARLY FEBRUARY

of 2010 a quartet of senior American statesmen gathered at the American Academy in Berlin at the urging of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) to discuss nuclear non-proliferation with their German counterparts. Henry A. Kissinger, Samuel A. Nunn, William J. Perry, and George P. Shultz engaged in a historic public discussion with Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Helmut Schmidt, and Richard von Weizsäcker. (Egon Bahr was unable to attend.)

Ernst Cramer, the eminent German-American journalist, who died on January 19, 2010, at the age of 96, had wanted to attend that evening. The former publisher, editor, and managing director of Axel Springer Verlag penned the following editorial, published the day after his death, in Die Welt:

The thought of eliminating, or at least reducing, the number of nuclear weapons in the world has been around for quite a long time. Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of the Soviet Union, spoke in Geneva last fall of "nuclear disarmament" and explained that it had been a "great illusion" that nuclear weapons had ever contributed to general safety. Now the efforts to disarm have obtained to international priority thanks to President Barack Obama's proposal of "a world without nuclear weapons."

Even Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev has spoken repeatedly of "nuclear disarmament," and Russia's role as a "trustworthy partner" in these efforts. A summit convened by Washington is to be held in April and is supposed to answer the call of nuclear demobilization.

The same intention has a meeting scheduled in February at the American Academy in Berlin, attended by eight experts – among them Henry Kissinger and Richard von Weizsäcker. All of this is necessary and important. But the main threat does not hail from the countries participating in the disarmament efforts, all of which are – to quote Medvedev again – "assessable."

Peril hails instead from the so-called rogue nations and their ruthless leaders, like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, or Kim Jong-Il of North Korea. The latter in particular does not care for international agreements. Not only does he plan the shipment of strategic and other weapons to sympathetic nations – like Burma and Iran – he also encourages his scientists to engineer small tactical nuclear bombs that are both easy to assemble and soon potentially available to terrorists.

Last year the U.S. already delivered a warning: "The dangers of a nuclear-equipped terrorism are real and deeply disturbing." Such weapons, in the hands of religious fanatics or suicide bombers, are the greatest menace to the future of humankind. How to avoid such a threat so far no politician can answer.

Ernst Cramer,
"A Nuclear Free World?"
Die Welt, January 20, 2010

ON MONDAY, MAY 16,

the American Academy in Berlin was honored to host the 2011 Henry A. Kissinger Prize, awarded to former Chancellor Helmut Kohl for his extraordinary role in German reunification and in laying the foundation for an enduring democratic peace in Europe.

The American consensus about Helmut Kohl's legacy knew no party lines: both of the evening's commemorative speakers, Robert Zoellick and Bill Clinton, hailed Kohl as one of the truly great postwar statesmen of Europe. Dr. Kohl's acceptance speech, delivered extemporaneously, moved the entire audience to a prolonged standing ovation. Afterwards, the exuberant crowd gathered in the Academy's villa for a reception, where statesmen, academics, journalists, donors, trustees, and staff members reflected on the speakers' words. The rain, which had poured down earlier, had abated, unleashing the pungency of early summer smells and accentuating the sensation, among all those present, of emerging from the evening with a new grasp of history. As the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* would later muse, "History is never written in the present tense. . . . But how, if not historic, should one describe what took place at the beginning of this week in Berlin, out there in Wannsee, in a tent in the garden of the American Academy?"

Gary Smith,
from the fall 2012 *Berlin Journal*

WHEN PEOPLE LEAVE OFFICE

and the first brush is taken at their legacy, it is tempting to remember and to elevate any crisis which occurred, and the response to it. If there was a war, we remember it. If there was a terrorist act, we remember it. But if they make the right decision on a clean slate and shape the world in a way that takes it in a totally new direction, people go with the flow and they look back and assume that must have been easy. If the dog does not bark, it is the best statecraft, but the weight of the decision may be overlooked.

Think of all the decisions that had to be made after the Berlin Wall fell. The one that gained Helmut Kohl the greatest acclaim, for good reason, is "Would East and West Germany be reunified," but beneath that, if so, on what terms, how? Would Russia become a truly democratic partner with Germany, with Europe and the West, or would they embrace a different kind of hostile autocracy? It was not clear. Would there be a really strong European Union, economically and politically? And how should the US think about it?

> "I believe Helmut Kohl was the most important European statesman since World War II."
>
> **Former U.S. President Bill Clinton**

When I ran for president, there were actually people in the United States that thought European union was somehow terrible for the United States, that Europe would grow bigger and more prosperous than America. I said, "That's a good thing." But if the European Union would be big and strong, what would that mean? And how open would the doors remain to new members? What about NATO?

Everybody's forgotten this; a lot of people really did think that NATO had fulfilled its purpose when the Berlin Wall fell, and we should just let it go. Bring the troops home from Germany, save the money. We had long deferred needs in the United States. And if we stayed, what in the heck was NATO supposed to do, and who could be in NATO? How would it relate to Russia? And finally, what about Yugoslavia? As it also devolved into independent states and the violence in Bosnia rose, would anybody in Europe be responsible? Could NATO have a role outside its own members' borders, something that had never happened before? And what could Germany do about it? Because the Germans, while a member of NATO, had never, since World War II, sent German troops beyond its own borders.

He had to deal with every one of these questions, and I would argue that the reason my predecessor George H.W. Bush and I both believe Helmut Kohl was the most important European statesman since World War II is that he answered every single one of these questions correctly. Correctly for Germany, correctly for Europe, correctly for the United States, correctly for the future of the world.

An excerpt from former U.S. President **Bill Clinton's** remarks at the 2011 Henry A. Kissinger Prize

IT IS PERHAPS fitting, but also a bit ironic, that my remarks tonight are directed at the need to restore the integrity of capital markets, not least in the United States. That is a subject upon which we Americans have been fond of lecturing others, and certainly Stephen Kellen and the firm of Arnhold & Bleichroeder have represented the best of our traditions. (...)

We can't, however, escape the fact that the truly historic boom in the American stock market in the 1990s has been accompanied by weaknesses in our corporate culture. Ethical breakdowns among financial market participants are widely recognized. The procession of flagrant examples – beginning even before the sensational collapses of Enron and the Andersen accounting firm – have been a preoccupation of business reporting for more than a year; in fact, front page news for months at a time.

I do not believe that the apparent fraud or corporate looting of Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing, Adelphia, Tyco, and others are at all representative of American business practices. But I do fear they are an extreme manifestation of a more widespread tendency to "push the envelope" of what is acceptable or ethical business practice. (...) The large investment banks and the big commercial banks, both aggressively diversifying into lending, trading, stock research, investment company conglomerates, have become nests of conflict. A whole new profession of financial engineering has been invented, with its richly rewarded practice directed in large part toward finding ways around accounting standards and tax regulations. Consultants and advisors are readily available to promote and justify ever bigger mergers and acquisitions and to rationalize a ratcheting up of executive pay. (...)

What it all adds up to, in my view, is the importance of United States in bringing our practice more closely in line to what we preach. It is in our own interest. It is important, it seems to me, to Germany and other already industrialized countries that have a big stake in the success of a globalized financial system. And it may well be crucial to those countries which aspire to our economic success but face entrenched interests that resist change, modernization and full participation in the world economy.

The good news is that we have had a "wake-up call." The loss of eight trillion dollars or so in stock market valuations over the past two or three years does attract attention. The examples of gross corporate malfeasance have provided political support for change. The bad news is that change – constructive change – will not be easy.

Paul Volcker, from "Protecting the Integrity of Capital Markets," the inaugural Stephen Kellen Lecture, October 7, 2002

THE UNITED STATES and its allies must make sacrifices to close the Guantanamo Bay detention center in Cuba, Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. said Wednesday, in an emphatic appeal for Europe's help. Mr. Holder spoke at the American Academy in Berlin, not long after telling reporters that the United States had approved the release of about thirty Guantanamo detainees. "We must all make sacrifices, and we must all be willing to make unpopular choices," Mr. Holder said. "The United States is ready to do its part, and we hope that Europe will join us – not out of a sense of responsibility but from a commitment to work with one of its oldest allies to confront one of the world's most pressing challenges."

The *New York Times*, April 30, 2009

TO BE A GUEST at the American Academy is a very special honor for me, especially today, as we gather together to remember George Marshall, a man about whom we can doubtless say was a Secretary of State with far-reaching perspective.

In Berlin there are many points of contact with the United States of America. But thanks to you, Richard Holbrooke, Norm Pearlstine, and Gary Smith, the American Academy has developed a particularly special role, within just a few years of its founding, in 1994. For that I would like to express my warmest thanks. This house has become a central place for open discussion – for open discussion about the sense, purpose, and value of the transatlantic relationship, in all of its facets and dimensions, without taboos, and wholly dedicated to the task of passing on the importance and meaning of transatlantic discussion to the next generation.

And if we are talking about working together, then we are also talking about the very essence of the Marshall Plan. The unforgettable speech of the American Secretary of State sixty years ago, at Harvard, remains an exemplary sign of the success of American foreign policy and American values. (...)

European integration and the unification of our continent were only possible because America remained committed to Europe after 1945. The Marshall Plan was a pledge to a unified Europe, founded on the principle of freedom.

Mr. President, dear Mr. von Weizsäcker, twenty years ago, you, as German Federal President, delivered a speech at Harvard on the Marshall Plan. They raised the question as to the core of the transatlantic partnership. Your answer was – and I quote – "It is the idea of freedom." You said then that we had an obligation – and I quote again – "to seriously comprehend freedom as a responsibility." I think you were absolutely right.

Your words about freedom and responsibility and their inextricable connection were as valid then as they are now. Every generation since George Marshall has been faced in precisely this way with their own transatlantic opportunities and challenges.

Excerpt from a speech by Chancellor **Angela Merkel** on the anniversary of the Marshall Plan, at the American Academy, November 19, 2007

"During my college years, one of the books we all read with Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History.* I never forgot it. (...) His book excited me mostly because it described something unusual and extremely important: the relationship of philosophical ideas and practical events—the savage intersection where theories and personalities meet and sometimes end up changing the world, for better or for worse."

Richard Holbrooke, from the Foreword to Paul Berman's *Power and the Idealists* (2007)

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE rare evenings when political Berlin met intellectual Berlin. The German chancellor celebrated sixty years of the Marshall Plan – a.k.a. the European Recovery Program – at the American Academy and talked about German foreign policy present and future.

The subject was bound to create interest, as the chancellor's office has been, from Adenauer to the present, an institutional competitor to the Foreign Office when it comes to formulating foreign policy guidelines. Moreover, policy differences are visible and sometimes audible between the two involuntary partners of what came to be called the "Grand Coalition," since neither side finds this alliance particularly grand.

Introduced by Richard C. Holbrooke – former U.S. Ambassador to Bonn, subsequently undersecretary in the State Department – Merkel started by recalling the Marshall Plan strategy. She interpreted it as not only the economic dimension of U.S. containment vis-à-vis Stalin's USSR but also, via OECD, the basic formula for the future European Economic Community. When she mentioned that, in the early stages, the U.S. offer did indeed comprise massive economic help for Eastern Europe, until the Kremlin declined, one could sense the thought of how differently her own life would have evolved, if... The fact that today's EU extends to most of Eastern Europe is, in her view, the ultimate fulfillment of an American dream of both democratic vision and economic realpolitik. She sent a message to her critics, couched in historical narrative.

Freedom, said the chancellor, must always be coupled with responsibility. It sounded like a clarion call. In her eyes, this is what links the Marshall Plan to today's challenges. What happened in 1989 was not the end of history, but the fall of the USSR coincided with the full impact of modern-day globalization, its opportunities and its challenges.

In this sea change the Atlantic nations have to coordinate their talents and capabilities: in their economic relations, in security affairs, and in global architecture. All of this amounts to the endeavor to once again create more than a modicum of world order.

Russian alienation and how to respond to it are the major factors of uncertainty – not to mention the West's historical ignorance and strategic negligence. Merkel hopes to strengthen the NATO -Russia Council; a minimum requirement would be a profound overhaul of NATO's geometry at the top. Russia, she argues, should "grow step-by-step into the role of a security partner." We can only hope that the Russians share this vision. Notwithstanding the primacy of transatlantic bonds, it is remarkable how Merkel tries to reconcile Russia. She sees the present quarrels about overflight and landing rights, pipelines, and the price of oil and gas as controllable, despite the palpable mutual distrust. A few days earlier, Merkel's predecessor Gerhard Schröder criticized her publicly for both defending moral yardsticks and buying natural gas from Siberia. Merkel did not respond to this false dichotomy. She acted according to the Hanseatic practice in the face of irritation: do not even ignore it.

Michael Stürmer, "The Chancellor's Compass," *Die Welt*, November 21, 2007

AFTER TWO YEARS of careful planning and preparation, and with resounding support of the Academy's board of trustees, the maiden Richard C. Holbrooke Forum begins on the evening of Thursday, June 5, 2014, with an introductory discussion followed by a dinner hosted at the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Germany, John B. Emerson, and will continue through the weekend at the American Academy in Berlin with a series of roundtable discussions.

This Forum workshop, "Statecraft and Responsibility," is co-chaired by Michael Ignatieff, of the Harvard Kennedy School, and Harold Hongju Koh, of Yale Law School. Together, over the past few months, they have managed to bring together an exceptional group of scholars, policy experts, and professionals to address a range of concrete topics germane to how responsibility for managing critical problems – from conflict, civil war, financial crisis, and climate change – is being redistributed in a multipolar world.

The first session, on Friday, June 6, reviewed Richard Holbrooke's diplomatic legacy in Bosnia to see how that process bears on resolving current civil conflicts. This leads into three days of sessions on the problems Bosnia is facing today, the challenges of legitimacy and legality in the Syrian conflict, and, more broadly, questions addressing the coordination of new global public goods that would reinforce, or replace, those put in place by the United States at the end of World War II. Another session asks what the consequences of globalization are for some of the core conceptions of liberal democracy.

As we have stressed in the past, the Holbrooke Forum is not a conference center or a standard think-tank. Rather, it is envisaged as an iterative process, with as many participants as possible returning for subsequent meetings – the next two, in winter and spring, also to be chaired by Michael Ignatieff and Harold Koh. The Forum's third and fourth projects are being prepared for launch in the spring and summer of 2015. They will deal, respectively, with the growing, multi-arena networking of Asia, Europe, and the United States, and with the troubling resilience of authoritarianism around the world.

Growing tensions in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, and between China and its immediate neighbors have again demonstrated the pertinence of our decision to steer the Holbrooke Forum's energies towards the evolving discipline of global governance.

By underscoring Holbrooke's insistence on serious, independent investigation into some of the most vexing problems facing national and global security, the Academy not only honors its founder, it also marks its own twentieth anniversary with a new initiative designed to convene scholars, policy experts, journalists, businessmen, military officials, and public servants together to generate the kind of unexpected solutions for which Richard Holbrooke was known.

Letter from Academy Vice-Chair **Gahl Hodges Burt** and Executive Director **Gary Smith** to the donors to the Richard C. Holbrooke Forum, June 4, 2014

Americans on Berlin

The American Academy in Berlin was conceived of as much more than just an academic monastery or transatlantic institute. Through the careful cultivation of a community of fellows, the Academy aids in the **cross-fertilization of ideas** that often results in quirky and sophisticated impressions of the German capital, which fellows take back with them

GREENWOOD ROSE

and stood stiffly, looking beyond the balcony to the water. A two-man scull was ghosting alone a hundred yards out. A patch of mallards rose and skittered away, settling on the far side of the scull. Weather approached from the northeast, exactly as they had predicted on the morning news, the American woman with the long legs and leisurely diction, all the time in the world to connect the Bermuda High with the Warsaw Low, and look what's happening here in Atlanta. It would be dark in thirty minutes, the sun too weak to pierce the dark vein of cloud. Across the lake the lights came on in the villas back on the yacht basins, the yellow glow nervous on their regular surface of the water, waffling now in the breeze. The brightly colored sails of the yachts disappeared as the light failed. He imagined cooks in caps and starched aprons, and a table laid for a family of five, grace said, conversations low to begin. The first few minutes of the meal, it was so quiet you could hear the clocks tick. People in this part of the world did not like to talk while they ate; never begin a second job until you have finished the first.

The two-man scull changed course and headed for home. He had met the scullers, two retired accountants in their fifties, fit as mountaineers, taciturn as owls. They always drank a beer in the tavern on the corner when they finished with the boat, and Greenwood was often there at the same time. The accountants were slick with sweat and exhilarated from their rowing, drinking their beer straight sown and then waiting patiently for the barman to draw them another, a process that took five minutes. They had no interest in discussing their sculling or their families, and were uninterested in what drew Greenwood to their country. They were happy to lecture him on the superior security arrangements of Europe, plans that allowed a faithful employee to work until he was fifty-five and then retire with money enough to live on, and time to scull whenever he wished and take vacations in Spain during the worst of the winter weather, and set aside money for the children as well. Wasn't it wise for the old to make way for the young? And the state provided, as it had every right to do. It seemed pointless to inquire whether they missed their accounting. When eventually they asked Greenwood what he did before he retired – he was older than they were and surely drew a pension of some kind – and he replied that he was a filmmaker engaged in accounting of a personal nature, they lost all interest.

The water darkened as the clouds lowered; and then Greenwood smiled, watching the little passenger ferry make its slow transit beyond the mallards. That meant the time was four-forty-four precisely, only six minutes to go in the twenty-minute run from Kladow to Wannsee, the passengers already collecting their shopping bags and briefcases, already looking toward shore, already anticipating the evening meal. This was usually the time he put away his work and made for the tavern down the street from the train station, careful to snitch the *Herald Tribune* from the library downstairs for reading material, in case the scullers were not talkative, or talkative only with each other. He enjoyed sitting at the far end of the bar with his beer and the newspaper, a leisurely sixty-minute read. During the first weeks of his residence, Greenwood invited some of the others in the House to join him, but they never did, fearing distraction from their work, and perhaps fearing also that such an occasion might become a habit or worse, a ritual. Everyone knew that the winter months at Wannsee were disorienting, the sun disappearing for weeks at a time and the weather raw. A frigid mist arrived, the sullen breath of the Baltic, and at those times the weight of the past was palpable.

In the winter it was recommended that one remain with oneself, living with circumspection, resisting temptation. The staff told lurid tales of previous residents who disappeared as early as three in the afternoon, returning to dinner befuddled and hilarious; and sometimes not returning until late in the evening accompanied by new friends, trailing the usual noise and disorder. More than once the police became involved owing to altercations at the tavern, a terrible embarrassment for the House. The Rector was embarrassed, though no charges were ever filed. Of course there was no publicity because the House was under the protection of the government, all courtesies extended to the scholars, writers, and other intellectual authorities from America. But there was no mistaking the smirk of the police lieutenant as he laid the disagreeable facts. Under the influence of drink, the Americans were worse even than the teenage skinheads who loitered drunkenly at the train station harassing commuters. At any event, Greenwood was not tempted that afternoon. He had more work to do, and he had laid away plenty of vodka in the tiny fridge under the sink.

Ward Just, "Fade Out," from a novel-in-progress, written in residence as a spring 1999 Berlin Prize Fellow

WE LIVED IN BERLIN,

and one night we went out to a restaurant near Zionkirche, where one could eat and drink and afterward pay whatever one deemed fair. In other words, there were no prices; it was completely up to the customer. At the start of the night it seemed like an almost laughably wonderful idea in the way that, say, Swedish healthcare is: sweetly earnest, almost too good to be true, and impossible to imagine existing in America. But as the meal wore on, the generosity of the restaurant staff – who went on selflessly filling the table with tasty dishes without any assurance of being adequately paid – began to feel more and more burdensome. Rather than dismissing the question of money, the little game we were all playing only drew attention to it in the most exacerbating way; and not just the question of money, but of moral character. By the end of the meal it was clear that the only way out of the situation was to pay an exorbitant sum, many times more than one would ordinarily pay for such a meal, in order to wrestle back from the insidiously beneficent staff of the restaurant a shred of moral dignity.

The saving grace was that we had gone with a friend of ours, an Italian painter, in his sixties, and along with his elegant wife, the Italian painter had brought a Brazilian friend, and the Brazilian had brought a Korean woman, and as we were leaving the restaurant someone came up with the idea of going to a ping-pong club. All of us piled into the Korean woman's 1974 Citroen. When you turn the ignition you have to wait a moment while the hydraulic pumps kick in and lifts the back part of the car off the wheels, and once we had all been buoyed up in silence, we took off in search of the club. It was difficult to find, and we'd almost lost hope when finally we came upon Mr. Pong on a street off of Schönhauser Allee: a small concrete room, with a DJ and about twenty kids with paddles. They all circulated the table counterclockwise, each taking a turn at hitting the oncoming ball. Whoever missed a shot was eliminated, until there were only two players left. These two played a little informal game –to three points, or five, whatever they felt like – until one banged the table with the paddle and all of the others jumped up to begin a new game. Young kids – nineteen, twenty-one at most – racing madly around the table and barely talking to one another at 1a.m. on a Tuesday. It was impossible to say whether they were friends who met every night, or strangers who had never met before. At a certain point, a girl with a choppy Eighties haircut who made it to the finals quite often abruptly slipped her paddle into its case, tucked it into her messenger bag, and exited into the night. The Italian painter was older than everyone by forty years, his hair was white, and when he reached the finals everyone cheered for him. Otherwise the players made no acknowledgment of us.

The following week we went to a different restaurant, this time one where you eat in impenetrable darkness, served by blind waiters. At first J. felt claustrophobic and started to panic, but after about five minutes he began to settle into his blindness, and soon he had relaxed so much that he began to indulge in a medley of spastic facial tics and grimaces as the urge struck him. These continued throughout the meal (or so he said; of course I couldn't see a thing), and toward the end of the main course, nearing the desert, sometime after we'd lost, irrecoverably, the thread of our conversation, the spasms were augmented by a kind of squawking and a low hooting. Judging from the number of similarly strange noises that could be heard coming from other diners at sea in the darkness, I have to assume this loosening of inhibition was a standard reaction. As for me, the darkness only enhanced my tendency toward introversion. At certain points I had to struggle not to fall asleep. When J. spilled his beer, the waiter, who must have been hovering all the while at his elbow, let out a giddy laugh.

We had barely recovered from that when, some days later, we were invited to dinner at the home of two art collectors who lived in a huge white neoclassical house hunched over the road in the garden suburb of Dahlem. Inside there were only tall ceilings, veined marble, whiteness, and paintings by Kiefer, Warhol, Baselitz, and Beuys.

We sat down for dinner at a table that appeared to be the only piece of furniture in the house. The conversation burbled along, interrupted now and again by the Indian staff who came and went with a variety of Ayurvedic dishes. We came around to the subject of the house. One Sunday, our host told us, he woke up and there were bright lights shining through the window – a TV crew was outside. "What are you doing here?" he asked. They told him that the house had belonged to a Jewish family who had lived in a small crawlspace under the roof for two years during the War.

The conversation then moved on to children – we had one son, like them, though ours was still an infant and theirs was now our own age. Our host, who clearly doted on his child, regaled us with stories about when his son was young.

"In those days," he said, "I used to play tennis many afternoons with a certain Dr. Aunheim, who had trouble finding another tennis partner, and often I would complain about him to my wife. One day my wife took our son in the stroller to the drugstore. 'And what is your name?' the druggist asked the little boy. 'Dr. Aunheim,' he replied."

Berlin is full of these little abysses.

Nicole Krauss, "Blind Restaurant," written while in residence as a spring 2007 fellow

IT'S FUNNY,

a friend just emailed and said, "Send me a list of three strange things and one ordinary thing that you saw this week." And I didn't even know how to make that distinction. I think a German would draw the lines really differently. This is a silly example, but here at the Academy we had octopus and blood-sausage risotto. It was like this epic marine battle on the plate. I was at a loss to know how frequently this dish is consumed anywhere in the world – I really don't know.

Or the Wannsee, where we live. I guess this was a spectacularly cold season, so the whole lake froze, which was beautiful. I'm from Miami, so that continues to feel like Alien Planet to me. I've lived on the ocean, but I've never lived on a lake before, so that was strange in itself.

Then people's reactions to this dramatic change in the landscape were surprising to me. I mean, I was terrified to stand on the ice, but there were women rolling their babies in their little strollers – really, any verb that could be done on that ice: dogs were running around catching frisbees; people clogging; we saw everything out there. I thought that was remarkable. But it was also sort of matter-of-fact. It's interesting to try to gauge what is astonishing and unusual and what is normal in a foreign place.

Karen Russell, a spring 2012 fellow, from an interview in the spring 2013 *Berlin Journal*

PALACES

A city with a knife in its heart,
nerves exposed, arteries dangling, its temples to kingship,
religion, learning and art
begrimed, and pockmarked by bullets,
or spruced, sand-blasted and lacquered
to face the new market day. No wonder History
has a grim and elderly look.
She sits at the base of Schiller's statue,
manly, legs crossed, in her toga,
while her buxom sisters in negligé, Lyric,
Drama, and Philosophy, flirt with the passersby.
The boulevards convulse in excavations,
cranes rake the sky. The Palace of Tears
still runs with tears. In vacant lots
barrels protrude from puddles of khaki water,
pennants of shredded plastic shiver from chain link fence.
Loss opens the way, I wrote in a letter
that was not a letter of love.
On Sophienstrasse, a small, grubby-faced boy
works with scholarly concentration
to dislodge a cobblestone the size of a scone
from the sidewalk in front of Queen Sophie Luisa's church.
The neighborhood shakes to the dentist's drill:
panel by coppery panel, girder by girder,
new labor dismantles old labor's Palast der Republik.

Rosanna Warren, a spring 2006 fellow, from her collection *Ghost in a Red Hat* (2011)

WE HADN'T BEEN installed more than three days before we heard about the bunker. It was right under us, apparently, directly beneath the elegant lakeside villa that had once housed a Jewish banking family – the Hans Arnholds – and that now housed us, a small group of scholars and artists staying at the American Academy in Berlin. Well, this was Germany, wasn't it? Across the lake stood the Wannsee Conference House, where the Final Solution had been formulated over coffee cake. In such a neighbourhood, why be surprised to find a Nazi bunker in your backyard?

Nevertheless, we were. The villa had been recently renovated. A Francisco Clemente – on loan – hung in the living room. Also a Rauschenberg. During media events when politicians showed up, movie screens unscrolled from the ceilings. Glittery, Klimt-like tile work decorated the tympanum of the dining room. The paneled library might have been Bruce Wayne's.

This hotel or conference center gloss was only the latest transformation of the old house, however. During the 1930s Hans Arnhold had taken his family out of Germany, and the villa, like many mansions in this affluent part of Berlin, had been seized by the National Socialists. Hitler's economics minister, a man named Walther Funk, had lived in the house until the end of the war. After that, the villa had been occupied by American officers, serving as a recreation center for American troops.

It was Herr Funk who had put in the bunker. In her memoir of those years, *The Past is Myself,* Christabel Beilenberg makes clear that this sort of home improvement was a fad at the time: "It was common knowledge that the party bigwigs were building air raid shelters under their lakefront mansions." Hitler himself had inspected the bunker under the Academy.

Over that fall and early winter, we talked about the bunker constantly at dinner. We asked the Academy's executive director, Gary Smith, to describe it for us. "I'll show it to you sometime," Gary promised. But with one thing and another, he never did. And so we stopped talking about the bunker. And then a week later somebody brought it up again and we started asking the usual questions: How big was it? How deep? What did it look like inside?

Sometimes while working I would look out of my office at the sloping lawn that led down to the lake. There was a large drained swimming pool on one side of the property. The grass itself was browning or weedy in spots. Gatsby would have had a bigger staff of gardeners, but there were still a few around, mowing and pruning, digging. Sometimes a frog hopped past my glass door. Impressive clouds, somehow Prussian, boiled and marched over the lake. The lake itself was gray most days but could suddenly fool you and turn blue. Ferries plied the water. The American Yacht Club was right next door, as was, rumor had it, a brothel patronized by business executives. My attention would be taken up by all these things and then, often enough, I would lower my gaze from the dramatic sky to look at the grass and think about the bunker below.

Our obsession with the bunker came partly from the word itself. You can hardly say the word "bunker" without adding a certain name before it: "Hitler's bunker." Bunker and Hitler are inseparable. (I suspect it was the fascistic connotation that led Norman Lear to name his great, bigoted character "Archie Bunker.") But if you think about it a minute, it's clear that there is nothing especially historic or significant about a bunker. As Christabel Beilenberg pointed out, a bunker is nothing but an air raid shelter. How many WWII-era bunkers must there be in Berlin, in Germany, or in all of Europe for that matter? Winston Churchill had a bunker of his own beneath the streets of London. He prosecuted the Second World War largely from underground. Still, the image we have of Winston Churchill isn't subterranean. Churchill descended to the under-world during the winter of life. Down there he overcame death and returned above ground, like spring wheat. Hitler didn't. Down in the bunker was where he perished. Something about this appeals to the imagination. It feels right. Down in the dirt, down with the earthworms and the creepy blind unsunned moles, down where corruption takes place, that's where Hitler belongs.

> "Then one night a terrible thing happened. August Kleinzahler, the poet, got to see the bunker all by himself."
> **Jeffrey Eugenides**

Then one night a terrible thing happened. August Kleinzahler, the poet, got to see the bunker all by himself. One evening, as I arrived for dinner, Michael Meltsner grasped me by the lapels. "Gary took August down to the bunker," he told me in a grave tone. Was this true? I found Kleinzahler in the library, sitting in his usual armchair. He looked shiny cheeked, pleased with himself.

"You saw the bunker?"

"Yes, I did."

"What's it like?"

"It's not much."

"Is it true that Hitler was down there?"

Kleinzahler gave me a level stare. "I didn't see him," he said.

Over the fireplace, not far from Kleinzahler, hung a portrait of Hans Arnhold. Arnhold's daughter, Anna-Maria, and her husband, Stephen Kellen, are the primary benefactors of the American Academy in Berlin. Anna-Maria Kellen had grown up in this very house. When the idea arose to start an American Academy in Berlin, the Kellens had been the first to give financial support. She had been kept apprised of the progress, was told that a building had been found and that it would be renovated. Only later did she discover that, by an amazing coincidence, this building was her childhood home.

Anna-Maria Arnhold became an American. In the early 1950s, after her marriage, she came back to Berlin with her husband. The plane coming into Tempelhof flew in low over the Wannsee. Anna-Maria looked out the window to try and find her old house. The woman seated next to her then spoke.

"Do you know that house, too?"

"Yes," answered Anna-Maria.

The woman smiled. "My husband and I spent many wonderful nights there. Herr Funk used to throw wonderful parties."

It was from her seatmate that Anna-Maria Kellen learned about the bunker. After landing in Berlin, she and her husband drove out to the Wannsee. The old family gardener was still there. He had been Funk's gardener, too, throughout the war. Coldly, he showed the Kellens around the house. When they asked to see the bunker, he took them down.

After they had come out, as they were driving away, Mrs. Kellen said to her husband, "You know, that gardener could have shut the door behind us. No one would have ever found us."

"I know, my dear," Stephen Kellen replied. "That was why I made sure to walk behind him."

I went on with my work. Weeks passed. The plane trees lost their leaves, revealing their stunted, twisted arms. A winter fog began to cover the Wannsee. One night there was a lecture. When the guests had gone, we went into the library to talk and smoke. Reinold, the chef, brought out a tray of liqueurs. A plum-flavored schnapps began making the rounds.

There were eight of us: two historians, one linguist, one novelist, one poet, a composer who lived in Paris, a Harvard law professor, and a visual artist. We were talking, that night, about a bad smell that had been gathering in the basement where our studios were. It had started in Milad Doueihi's office."

"I can't even work there anymore," he complained.

"They think it might be coming from under the kitchen," one of the historians said. "There's a tube where all the fat drains out. Maybe it's clogged."

"It's the schmaltz!" said Augie. "I knew it."

"It's not the schmaltz," I said. "It's the bunker."

In the next moment, providentially, the executive director entered the room.

We were on him at once.

"When are you going to show us the bunker, Gary?"

"You promised you'd show it to us!"

"How come Augie got to see it and we didn't?"

We were unstoppable, fueled by Pomeranian schnapps. We had eaten an obscure Baltic fish for dinner. We had been living and working on top of a Nazi bunker for nearly three months and we wanted to see it. Tonight was the night.

Gary knew there was no putting us off. The signal was given. Reinold lit candelabra and handed them around. We crossed the dining room and entered the kitchen. At the back a door led to a flight of stairs. Laughing, fluttery, already making cracks, we each held a candelabrum and followed our leader down the dark stairs into the earth.

"I'm trying to raise the money to build a health club down here," Gary joked.

"Ve haf vays of making you get in shape!"

"How come you know this place so well, Reinold?"

"We keep the Riesling down here."

"Ah, it's not a bunker. It's a wine cellar."

Candle flames streamed backward, thinning as we moved. We were in our dinner clothes, the women wobbly in high heels. Right in front of me was Meltsner. Usually he wore sweatshirts. Tonight he was in a blue blazer and white shirt. Even a tie. Finally, at the bottom, we came to the bunker door. We grouped there, silent, staring at it. The joking stopped. The door to the bunker was slightly convex, like the hatch of a tank. Greenish gray, cobwebby, rusted at the edges. The glass spyhole was pro-tected by a metal shield. Bullets wouldn't have penetrated it. At length, Reinold pulled the door open and we went inside.

Kleinzahler was right. It wasn't much. No artifacts remained, no furniture. The ceiling was low, the walls chalky. There were two or three long, narrow rooms. At the end another door led up to the back lawn. We might have been in a basement anywhere.

Only one thing showed the underground space for what it had been. Just inside the front door was a small engineering room. Here were the controls for ventilation and plumbing. Elegantly designed manifolds and valves, the height of modernity back in 1942, lined one wall. Each in slanting Fraktur script proclaimed the element it brought into the bunker: Luft. Wasser.

What did we expect to find? What do we seek by going to the sites of atrocity? There was no difference, at bottom, between our trip to the bunker and a visit to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, outside Berlin. We wanted to draw near to historical evil, to see and touch it if we could, and somehow comprehend it. Such ghoulish sightseeing has become a kind of perverse pilgrimage, marked by required stops and ritualized thoughts. Therefore, I couldn't help staring at those beautifully designed controls and thinking about "the rationality of evil" or "the mechanization of the death camps." All true, no doubt, but not my thoughts. Only borrowed, recited like a litany.

It was cold down there in the bunker. Meltsner had backed into a wall. His blue blazer was all white behind. I slapped his back. Meltsner grew up in New York and became one of the big civil rights lawyers. He defended Muhammad Ali when they tried to take his heavyweight title away. Now this Meltsner, originally from the Upper West Side, was down in the Nazi bunker with me, and I was pounding him on the back.

"You've got white stuff all over," I said.

The white dust flew up. It sparkled in the light of the candles we had brought down with us.

Jeffrey Eugenides, "The Bunker," written while in residence as a 2000-2001 Berlin Prize Fellow, from the spring 2003 *Berlin Journal*.

THE TEMPERATE evening of June 8 came to a roaring close at the Hans Arnhold Center, as musicians from the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra joined in on a sizzling impromptu jam session.

Members and trustees of the orchestra were at the Academy for a reception in honor of the orchestra's founder and artistic director, Wynton Marsalis, and Sir Simon Rattle, the chief conductor and music director of the Berliner Philharmoniker. The two cultural giants have been collaborating on a Marsalis project called Swing Symphony, which premiered the following evening, at the Berliner Philharmoniker.

The early-evening reception at the American Academy was attended by several trustees of New York's Neue Galerie and opened with instructors and students from the Curtis Institute of Music performing a movement of Jean Françaix's "Trio," for violin, cello, and viola; pianist Andrew Tyson playing a Chopin mazurka; and Curtis baritone Elliot Madore's commanding rendition of "Soliloquy," from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical Carousel.

After several lingering hours of conversation, a few JALC orchestra musicians – one of whom does leave home without his trumpet – initiated an unplanned post-reception jam session, which saw Wynton Marsalis and pianist Dan Nimmer suddenly trading fours with the likes of superstar German trumpet player Til Brönner, the JALC's trumpeter Marcus Printup, and jazz singer Judy Niemack-Prins, of the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler.

As the evening unfurled, cell-phones and digital cameras jumped to capture the atmosphere, music sweetened the early summer air, and legendary bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff sang an unrehearsed duet of a German folk song with cabaret baritone Max Raabe, founder and director of the Palast Ochester.

It was after midnight when the curtain finally closed on the impromptu session that brought out some of Berlin's and America's brightest musical stars to the fabled Hans Arnhold Center villa.

R. Jay Magill, "Wannsee Jam," from the fall 2010 *Berlin Journal*

In spring 2008 the photographer Mitch Epstein came to the American Academy in Berlin as a fine arts fellow. During his stay, he set out to examine Berlin's densely layered history by tracking down the remnants of its pained wartime past and complicated postwar histories. The resulting collection of photographs – of Weisensee cemetery, a deserted Tempelhof Airport, circus elephants in a Lichtenberg field, inside the Federal Foreign Office, all taken with a large-format camera – convey Berlin's unique capacity for the contradictory and surreal, each picture revealing a simultaneously opaque and transparent city – like in this image, Checkpoint Charlie, 2008 *(70 x 92 inches). In 2011 the American Academy joined forces with Steidl to publish a book of Epstein's unforgettable photographs, entitled, simply,* Berlin.

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POSTSCRIPT

September 9 marked the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the American Academy in Berlin. On that day, in 1994, just after the last of Allied forces departed the once divided city, Vice-President Al Gore presented Richard Holbrooke's vision of an institution that would broaden the German-American relationship and prepare it for the post-Cold War world.

We had no blueprint other than a shared determination to help lay the foundations of a new German-American partnership. Holbrooke urged us to think beyond conventional approaches to intellectual exchange, and at the Academy's heart would be a residential fellowship program to foster research, debate, and the testing of ideas, not just on policy issues but in just about every sphere of intellectual activity.

Within a few short years of the Academy's founding, its importance became dramatically clear. Since 1998, the Academy has hosted well over 400 fellows and many more speakers – a willfully heterogenous community comprised of novelists and nonproliferation experts, cultural historians, syndicated columnists, literary translators, and politicians – not exactly a traditional fellowship program. Just as intense as the cross-fertilization of ideas within the villa was the receptiveness of Berliners to dialogue. The Americans were also struck by the openness of German media to transporting their ideas into the public sphere, whether the *taz*, *FAZ*, inforadio, or Deutsche Welle.

Berlin was a stop on the creative Grand Tour, its contours visible in the fiction of Jeffrey Eugenides and Nicole Krauss, the artwork of Mitch Epstein and Julie Mehretu. Jenny Holzer found inspiration in the Neue Nationalgalerie, Paul Berman in Joschka Fischer's transformation, Xu Bing in Dahlem's East Asian collections, and David Ignatius among Berlin's hackers.

German chancellors, senior officials, and figures from business, scholarship, and the arts came for meetings and programs. When Helmut Kohl received the Academy's Henry A. Kissinger Prize, Bill Clinton and Bob Zoellick explained why Americans regard him as one of the great postwar European statesmen. Last year we paid tribute to a German hero, Ewald von Kleist.

It is hard to overstate the importance of the Academy's decision to be private and nonpartisan. Sometimes it seemed like a moveable debate feast, as during the week-long visits of Supreme Court Justices Stephen Breyer, Antonin Scalia, and Sonia Sotomayor; or when, in 2006, State Department's John Bellinger explained Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib and was soon followed by Harvard Law professor Lawrence Tribe's strongly dissenting view on the Bush Presidency. We won't forget the drama around Ambassador Chris Hill's speech revealing his secret meetings with the North Koreans that day, or Energy Secretary Abraham's unscheduled stop to discuss Kyoto.

The shock of Richard Holbrooke's untimely passing, on December 13, 2010, has not diminished. To perpetuate his commitment to addressing humankind's most intractable challenges, we recently launched the Richard C. Holbrooke Forum for the Study of Diplomacy and Governance. As we are again facing a period of historic transformation – a world that seems to be "unwinding," to borrow from alumnus George Packer's recent groundbreaking book – the Holbrooke Forum, whose first meeting addressed "Responsibility and Statecraft," will become a keystone of the Academy's approach.

I belong to the generation that first experienced Germany through relatives forced to flee the country; in my case, the cultural sensibility my mother and her family brought from Zerbst and Königsberg. The first gift I recall from my Tante Ruth was *Mörike's Ausgewählte Gedichte und Erzählungen* in the *blauen Bücher* series. And I can still recite more of *Prometheus* than any comparable English poem.

Understanding and translating this culture has been a lifelong preoccupation. The experience of founding the Einstein Forum in Potsdam soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall was formative of the kind of freedom possible for a scholar and intellectual entrepreneur. I was fortunate to be able to experiment there with some of the kinds of programs we later developed at the American Academy in Berlin.

The world of an institution built upon the foundation of private generosity would prove quite different that of the government-funded institute, however. As an American in Potsdam, I was dazzled by the possibilities offered by a state whose support of intellectual life was a given. As the director of the privately funded Academy, I would learn how articulating the Academy's vision dramatically sharpened our thinking about the institution, ensuring both transparency and accountability.

Many exceptional individuals have contributed to this process, none more decisively than the great family behind the Stephen and Anna-Maria Kellen Foundation. As we mark twenty years since Holbrooke presented his bold idea, we wish to thank the many individuals and corporations who have made the Academy the extraordinary place it is today. It was the privilege of my life to become its founding director, and I am confident it shall continue to flourish.

Gary Smith
Executive Director