



## **Sculptures**

### **Object**

2014, tin object found at the intersection of Los Leones, Simón Bolívar and Chile España Streets in Santiago. About 30 cm. long, 2014.

## ***Sculpting the Law***

The intention behind the creation of these sculptures—of collecting, copying and even buying some objects, and then circulating them certified as objects, or as abstract sculptures or found objects, emerges from a simple curiosity that is related to the legal status of things. In the art world, the limits that make something unsellable—and the limits of the readymade, to name one category of things that are fatally associated with the notion of the found object—have become almost negligible. But they still exist, on occasion, in a very specific, precise sense. One specific limit is the distinguishing line between what is legal and what is illegal. Sculpture has shifted in many ways. There is, for example, the “social sculpture” of Joseph Beuys. Regarding this point it might be useful, amusing even, to introduce the notion of “legal sculpture” while recalling the Duchampian concept of “assisted readymade”—except for the fact that in the case of one of the pieces in this series (entitled, precisely, *Sculpture*), the assister is a curator who is, in turn, assisted by the cultural attaché (of a peculiar kingdom, Spain), who is enabled, in turn, by what the incisive Peter Bürger calls the “art-institution.” This distinction may seem naive but it also feels, in some way, necessary.

As I said, in the art world the limits that make something unsellable—and the limits of the readymade the remnants of the unmarketable—and the limits of the readymade or *objet trouvé*—have become almost negligible. But they still exist and the law draws those lines and limits. For example, it is not a matter of simply “selling,” at an art fair, a homemade gun from a prison or a shantytown in the outskirts of Santiago, Chile or any other city in the world, for that matter. To do so would be tantamount to committing a crime: that of possession, trafficking and sale of illegal weapons. Yet we could certainly exhibit an identical replica of the weapon—whether a firearm or sharp-edged object—inside a glass case or a diplomatic pouch, and appropriately “certified” as “sculpture” or “objet trouvé” as I did. But is it a replica, really? Is it an abstract sculpture, a category for which all forms and materials are valid, or an illegal weapon disguised as a sculpture? How can a steel rapier be a replica of another steel rapier? There is something ridiculous about this question, because what makes a rapier a rapier is neither its form nor

its material but its use, and that use precludes it from being treated as a readymade. At a fair, one can use a urinal, of course, but one cannot stab someone without his or her consent (and, in fact, it may be illegal to stab someone even with his or her consent). For this reason, one single thing may actually correspond to those three objects: rapier, sculpture and replica, in different potential worlds. What interests me is superimposing two possible worlds by certifying a rapier as a sculpture so that it may pass through an airport’s security checkpoints and travel in the cabin as part of the carry-on luggage of a diplomat from the Kingdom of Spain (regarding this, it should be noted that it was the Spanish curator Nilo Casares who thought of making a work of art fit into a piece of luggage, and that despite this he was positively surprised when he learned that he had to certify a rapier used in prison as a sculpture and a found object). To date, the “sculpture” has been exhibited in Madrid, Santiago (Chile), Melbourne and Rome, and is slated to be exhibited in nine more cities, including London, Sao Paulo, Munich, Istanbul, Mexico City, and Montevideo.

That is the weight of the law and of diplomacy, and certainly without the proper certificate the rapier—because that is what it is—would never have been able to pass through customs and security at any airport.

With regard to that object (replica, rapier or sculpture) perhaps we could sell it to a collector who has amassed a fortune—as well as philanthropic resources—in the business of privately-run prisons, and we could sell—or give away—a work of art condemning profit-making ventures in education to an education tycoon. This would close another kind of circle. This would be a magnificent example of the extent to which an object’s meaning depends on its context of its use, and how that dependence is part of a legal and commercial apparatus that establishes, very precisely, the limits of the readymade. Not everything can be sold as a readymade (and it doesn’t take much imagination to come up with objects that would be impossible to be included as part of the world of art, its institutions and its market).

In prison, some people fashion sharp objects out of things like toothbrushes, removing their bristles and sharpening the ends. In this context, a butcher knife, purchased in a department store, is more than a piece of kitchen equipment. Others create homemade armor by stringing bibles together with wire strands to

form a breastplate that protects the prisoner from his attacker’s assault. Finding, cutting and reassembling are common practices in the world of prison DIY. Clad with paper, shielded and excused by the word of God—of Marx, the Criminal Code or the countless numbers and names in the phone book, and armed with a long and a short spear (which is doubled as a shield thanks to the handle crowned with a disk), the prison gladiator entered the arena of the Ex-Penitenciaría (Santiago’s old prison). Waiting for him he would find an identically armored opponent.

In the pouch, on the other hand, shotgun, armor, knife and arena disappear.

**Demian Schopf**, December 2014.



**Scythe**  
Purchased from an artisan at the Valparaíso, Chile Flea Market, about 50 cm. long, 2010.



**Sculpture**  
16-sided hollow, irregular steel polyhedron, about 68 cm. long, 2014.



**Sheep Shear Knife**  
Purchased from a farmer at the Chilean countryside, about 25 cm. long, 2016.



**Replica**  
16-sided hollow, irregular steel polyhedron, about 33 cm. long, 2015.



### **Sculpture #1**

Sculpture #1 consisted of certifying an illegal weapon as a “sculpture” and “found object.” In this way the sculpture was made to circulate in the art scene inside a diplomatic pouch carried by diplomats from and to institutional spaces related to art. The pouch, which holds an illegal weapon, must negotiate airport customs containing, now, something that has been legalized as a “sculpture.” To date, this work has been exhibited in Santiago (Chile), Madrid, New York, Rome and Melbourne.





N° 112-15 / NP

## CERTIFICADO

### Atención a:

Dirección General de Aeronáutica Civil DGAC (en el Aeropuerto Arturo Merino Benítez, de Santiago de Chile) y Aeropuertos Españoles y Navegación Aérea (AENA)

De mi consideración:

En Santiago de Chile, con fecha 25 de marzo de 2015, María Eugenia Menéndez, de nacionalidad española, **Consejera Cultural de la Embajada de España en Chile**, D.N.I: 44293279-V, con residencia en Av. Providencia 927, Providencia, CERTIFICA que:

En Valencia, Comunidad Autónoma de Valencia, Reino de España, con fecha 25 de marzo de 2015, el Señor Nilo Manuel Casares Rivas, ciudadano español, D.N.I: 32751068b, y curador de la muestra itinerante "Valija diplomática low cost", financiada por la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) a través de su programa de becas MAEC-AECID (convocatoria 2014-2015), asegura que la obra del artista chileno-alemán Demian Schopf Olea, R.U.T 14. 132.643-0 (para el caso de su ciudadanía de la República de Chile) y número de pasaporte C4CX3H5LK (para el caso de su ciudadanía de la República Federal

de Alemania y la Unión Europea), con residencia en Jorge Washington 482, Depto. 805, (código postal: 7790594), Comuna de Ñuñoa, Santiago de Chile, Región Metropolitana, República de Chile –de título "ESCULTURA"– es una escultura abstracta constituida por un poliedro irregular de hojalata que se encuentra adherido mediante tornillos y pegamento a una masa de espuma en la parte inferior de la valija que viaja por esta vía. La "ESCULTURA" es un OBJETO ENCONTRADO en la intersección de las calles Simón Bolívar, Chile-España y Los Leones. La "ESCULTURA" está cubierta por una plancha de acrílico fijada mediante tornillos de seguridad a la valija. Los tornillos de seguridad además de estar atornillados están pegados, lo cual hace imposible la extracción de la plancha de acrílico, y en consecuencia de la ESCULTURA durante el vuelo, o durante su estadía en los respectivos aeropuertos. La clave del seguro de la maleta es 417 y representa el mes de abril de 1917.

Atentamente,



María Eugenia Menéndez Reyes  
DNI. 44293279-V







**Sculptures**

Objects and magnetic bar for kitchen knives, 70 x 55  
cm. 2017

**Translation of the certificate**

**CERTIFICATE**

**To:**

General Direction of Civil Aviation DGAC (at Arturo Merino Benítez Airport of Santiago, Chile) and Spanish Airports and Air Transport (AENA)

To whom it may concern:

On the 25th of March 2015, in Santiago, Chile, María Eugenia Menéndez, of Spanish nationality and **Cultural Counsellor of the Embassy of Spain in Chile**, N.I.D. 44293279-V, located at Av. Providencia 927, Providencia, **CERTIFIES** the following:

In the Autonomous Community of Valencia, Valencia, Kingdom of Spain, on the 25th of March 2015, Mr. Nilo Manuel Casares Rivas, Spanish citizen National Identity Document Number 32751068b, with residence at Calle Convento de San Francisco 6, 2-3ª and curator of the touring exhibit “Valija diplomática low cost” (Low-cost diplomatic pouch), which has been financed by Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID), through its MAEC – AECID scholarship program (2014-2015 call), certifies that the artwork by the Chilean-German artist Demian Schopf Olea, Chilean national identity number 14.132.643-0 (representing his status as a citizen of the Republic of Chile) and German passport nº C4CX3H5LK (representing his status as a citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union), with residency in Jorge Washington 482, apartment 805, (post code: 7790594), Comuna de Ñuñoa, Santiago, Chile, Metropolitan Region, Republic of Chile, which carries the title “**SCULPTURE**,” is an abstract sculpture consisting of an irregular tin polyhedron which is fixed by screws and glue to a piece of foam on the lower part of the pouch that is travelling through this means of transport. The “**SCULPTURE**” is an object found at the intersection of the streets Simón Bolívar, Chile-España and Los Leones. The “**SCULPTURE**” is covered by a sheet of acrylic fixed to the pouch by security screws. The security screws are not only bolted but also glued; this fact makes it impossible to remove from its packing the acrylic sheet, as such, the “**SCULPTURE**” during flight or transit in the respective airports. The security code of the pouch is 417 and represents the month April of 1917.

Sincerely,

María Eugenia Menéndez Reyes  
National Identity Document 44293279-V

