

The Renaissance Society

at The University of Chicago

Josef Strau *The New World* *Application for Turtle Island*

September 21 – November 9, 2014

The New World, Application for Turtle Island contains all new work by Josef Strau, and is the artist's first solo exhibition in a US museum.

The lamps, found objects, and stream-of-consciousness texts are all characteristic of Strau's work, but here he has incorporated a number of new elements into his highly symbolic installations. Bright colors and figures, both animal and human, reflect the artist's experience in coming to North America—or, as the Native Americans called the continent, Turtle Island. This is also the first time Strau has fabricated new pieces, such as the bear and wolf sculptures, to show alongside found objects and text.

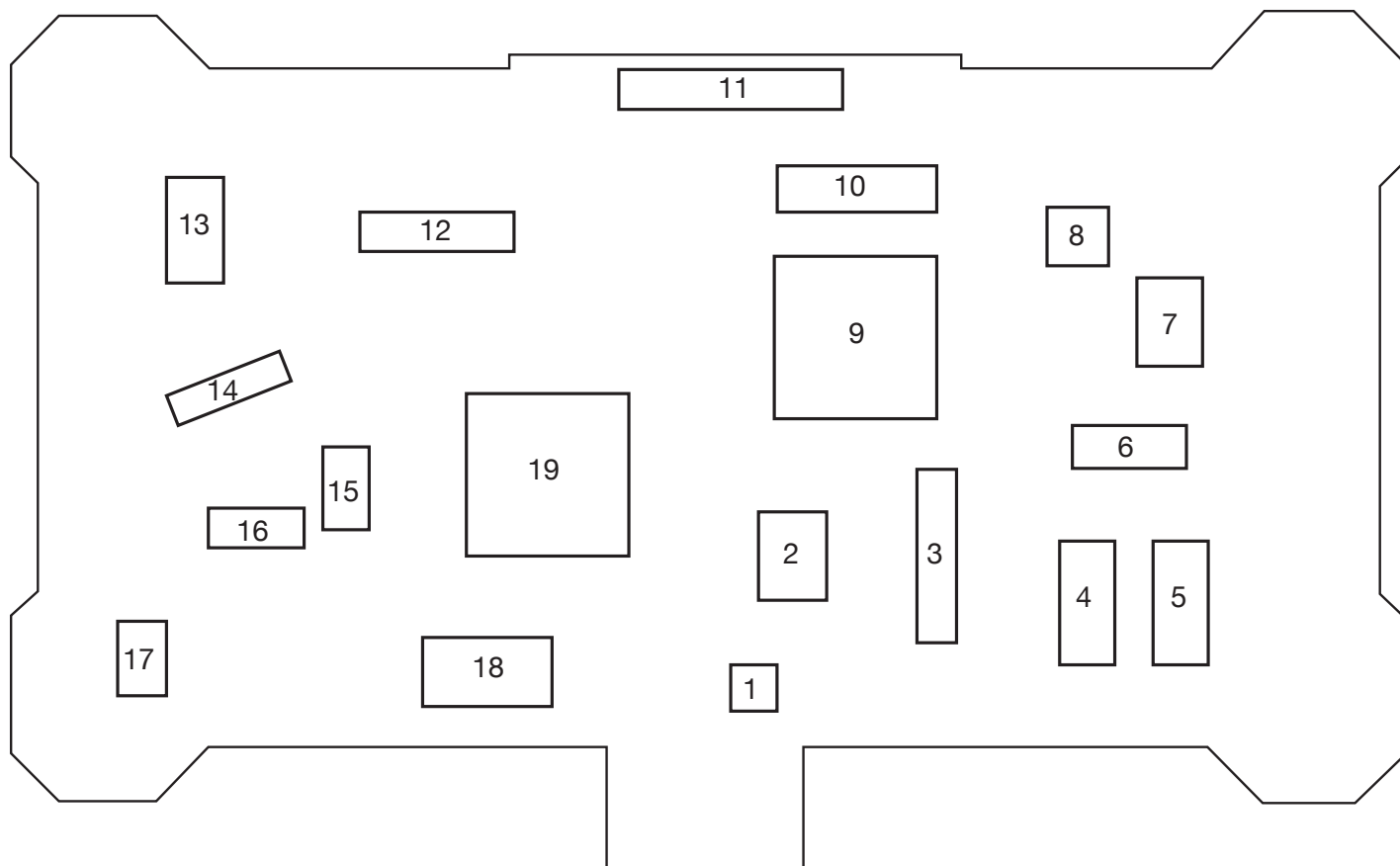
The New World, Application for Turtle Island draws on a rich history of narrative encounters between Europeans and the "New World"; Strau cites Terrence Malick's film *The New World* and Peter Handke's novel *Short Letter, Long Farewell* as influences alongside the stories of figures such as Black Elk, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and Moctezuma. This project is Strau's contribution to the collective canon, celebrating the possibilities of individual freedom and expressing gratitude for the hospitality and acceptance he has received on his journey.

Text has often played a role in Strau's work; however, here his writings for the first time take the form of an independent book (described by him as "a kind of treasure island adventure novel") that serves a structuring function, determining the production and selection of objects on view in the exhibition. The resulting installation brings together two different modes of production: in positing the writings as a highly personal output, and the objects as a shared, cooperative effort, Strau points to the dual threads of independence and dependence that have long been at the heart of immigrant stories.

The New World, Application for Turtle Island is accompanied by two related publications. The first, available to purchase for \$25, imagines itself as a visa application to Turtle Island, offering a more personal petition in lieu of the formal legal paperwork. The second will document the Renaissance Society installation alongside a critical text and introductions to different aspects of Strau's practice by artists with whom he has recently collaborated.

This exhibition is curated by Solveig Øvstebø, the Renaissance Society's Executive Director and Chief Curator.

Josef Strau (born 1957, Vienna, Austria) lives and works in Berlin and New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *My Divided House* at Vilma Gold, London (2014); *EDITION, REPETITION, COMPETITION* at House of Gaga, Mexico City (2013); and Josef Strau at Greene Naftali Gallery, New York (2012). He recently collaborated with Stefan Tcherepnin on a commission for the Liverpool Biennial (2014) and has shown in group exhibitions at Galerie der Stad Schwaz, Austria (2013), Air de Paris (2013 and 2012), and Essex Street, New York (2012). Strau has also practiced as an art critic and curator.



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| 1. <i>Encounter</i> | 11. <i>Oso Y Lobo Speak</i> |
| 2. <i>Freight</i> | 12. <i>Conversion</i> |
| 3. <i>Redemption</i> | 13. <i>Flowers Speak</i> |
| 4. <i>Clouds</i> | 14. <i>Raft</i> |
| 5. <i>Mississippi</i> | 15. <i>Shadow</i> |
| 6. <i>Macaw</i> | 16. <i>Mother of Cats</i> |
| 7. <i>Highway Sun</i> | 17. <i>Malinche Redeems</i> |
| 8. <i>Buddha of Cat</i> | 18. <i>Guadalupe Speaks</i> |
| 9. <i>Turtle Island</i> | 19. <i>Black Elk Speaks</i> |
| 10. <i>Invocation</i> | |

All works 2014; courtesy the artist, House of Gaga, Mexico City, and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.

The exhibition is produced by the Renaissance Society.

Please join us for a free gallery tour with Hamza Walker, Associate Curator and Director of Education, the Renaissance Society: **Thursday, October 16, 6pm** and **Sunday, November 9, 12pm**