

## **CAROLIN WENDEL**

Detailed biography

Last updated September 2014

Carolin Wendel is a German artist who studied painting with Neo Rauch. An artist who studied at the internationally-acclaimed Leipzig Academy of Visual Arts, she is a performance artist, sculptor and fashion designer. Together, they're weaved together in a persona named "McGyverova."

Wendel adopted the nickname "McGyverova" in reference to the 1980s TV series, MacGyver. The Slavic ending is the female twist of the lead character from the hit show, as Wendel channels a similar type of ingenuity, she uses everyday objects to create extraordinary things – including painting, tailoring, coding and a variety of tools.

"Turn shit into gold and make it from scratch," says Wendel. While MacGyver's tool of choice was a Swiss army knife, Wendel prefers scissors, a needle and thread.

The daughter of two World War II refugee families, Wendel's father was an architect and interior designer. She grew up with a house full of blueprints and paper models. By being around technical drawings, she inherited a love of accuracy and began designing shoes, harnesses and gloves. When she was given a sewing machine at 16-years-old, she got straight to work as a self-taught seamstress; she even paid her way through her studies at the Leipzig Art Academy by working as a product designer for an American baby care company.

After studying medieval studies at the University of Leipzig, she worked under Professor Rauch creating an incredible amount of painting work. Roughly 30 paintings from her studies show nostalgic childhood scenes where a mother hold up a baby in "Madonnenbild," to the more serious tone in "heli" and "As seen on TV," which looks into the life of a female war pilot. "R.I.P." shows children being told on how to wear gas masks. The first day she began studying art, the US and Iraq war began, influencing her war-related paintings. Looking back on Wendel's older paintings, they are akin to Eva Hesse, David Lynch or Francis Bacon. Previously, she studied with another Leipzig School artist, Arno Rink, in 2003.

Her first exhibition was in 2000 at Solar City in Leipzig. While she continued to exhibit regularly, one ground-breaking exhibition was her 2010 solo exhibition "solitaire | solidaire," which had a dozen king-size bed self-portraits at the Spinnerei, a world-renowned studio and gallery complex set in a former spinning mill.

Soon after, Wendel was featured in a New York Times' article about Leipzig's thriving art scene in 2010, photographed in her studio inside the Spinnerei. She was shot alongside her pink playing card-reminiscent painting "Herz Caro glow," her first artwork using LED lights, and a collection of sea shells. Her work was additionally featured in international art publications such as ArtSlant, Art News, ArtStars\* and enRoute magazine.

Around that time, Wendel made pieces like “12 Schweine” (12 Pigs or bastards, a word with a double meaning in German), a piece where she cast her body in plaster mold, filled with home-cooked red gelatin. The performance was held underneath a chandelier crafted from hundreds of melted CDS, involving the audience for a diner stabbing the artists’ body cast of Jell-O with French Fry Forks.

She also created black-and-white collage works from oil, acrylic and newspaper on canvas, most notably “lightning,” which includes a self-portrait of the artist which calls to mind Cindy Sherman. Her breakthrough piece “Waffensalbe” 2011 was a performance premiered at the ACC Galerie Weimar, showing Wendel handcrafting a women’s space suit from duct tape. She taped the women’s body so tightly, she could barely walk. Wendel’s most recent solo exhibition was in 2012 at Leipzig artist Ronny Szillo’s former art space in Leipzig, inbox93. A turning point in her work, from there on, Wendel freed herself from the obligatory paint brush.

She also showed as part of the “Exodus” exhibition at Essential Existence Gallery (EEG) Leipzig, and dozens of other group shows including “the Black Door Files” in Istanbul, which showcased an array of young German artists (along with Matthias Weischer for example), and “Herzplosion mit \*elektrisch orthodox\*” (Hearth explosion with electric orthodox), a performance collective she co-founded with female Leipzig artists.

Wendel’s performance art has always been very important to her, showcasing her sense of humor mixed with her subtle way of storytelling. She dressed herself up in self-tailored frog skin to autograph posters emblazoned with cold cuts for “Wurstplakate signieren” (Sausage poster autograph), a performance at Weißcube Galerie in Leipzig in 2012, for which she draped the gallery walls in a pattern of cold cuts taken from grocery store advertisements and collaged together into wallpaper („Wursttapete“). Meat is a theme in Wendel’s work which surfaced in 2012.

Since 2013, Wendel started making corsets from cut-up acrylic and heavier oil-on-canvas paintings. By giving old paintings a new life, the pieces are transformed, reworked and sewn together with traditional corsetry techniques.

Initially exhibited at B2 Galerie in Leipzig, the full series has seven corsets to symbolize the seven deadly sins (lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride). Each corset is tailored to the artist’s personalized shape, making the corsets a repetitive self-portrait. The seven sins draws a parallel to the role of artists, specifically traditional painters from Leipzig, “as well as being a woman in this artsy circus,” said Wendel. “To dare cut the sacred painting was in fact very liberating for me.” Even to some, it would be the eighth sin.

In 2014, Wendel co-founded ScobyTec (‘Symbiotic Colony of Bacteria and Yeast’), a Leipzig-based startup created in collaboration with Bernhard Schipper, media artist and a lecturer at Burg

Giebichenstein University Halle, and multimedia designer Karl-Ludwig Kunze. The team develops bio-tech materials based on bacterial cellulose.

With ScobyTec, Wendel helped design a unique piece of biocouture for men: a motorcycle jacket called 'Maximum Fungi', made from handcrafted kombucha leather. Made from 150 optical fiber cables, it is controlled by a microprocessor and illuminated with 10 RGB LED lights that mirror the shape of the muscle strands in the motorcycle driver's back. The electronics built into the vest are designed to visualize the driver's mood in real-time. Wendel was interviewed in the VICE technology blog MOTHERBOARD about ScobyTec in 2014.

Soon after, Wendel and team ScobyTec won second place in the 2014 Advanced Textile Products student Design Challenge with the project 'Maxium Fungi' by Karl-Ludwig Kunze, a prize granted by the Industrial Fabrics Association International. The winners will be officially announced at IFAI Speciality Fabrics Expo and Advanced Textile Expo in Minneapolis this October.

In late 2014, Wendel will be showing with ScobyTec at Leipzig's Designers' Open festival, followed by MAKE Munich. In 2015, Wendel plans to work on bio-tech corsets made from kombucha leather, among other projects.

## **CAROLIN WENDEL**

### **Brief biography**

German artist Carolin Wendel is an internationally-acclaimed performance artist, sculptor and fashion designer who has been featured in *The New York Times*, *VICE*, *ArtSlant*, *Art News*, *ArtStars\** and *enRoute magazine*.

The daughter of two World War II refugee families, Wendel grew up in a house full of blueprints. Her father was an architect and interior designer, so being around technical drawings and paper models was normal. When she was given a sewing machine at 16-years-old, she began designing shoes, harnesses and gloves. As a self-taught seamstress, she paid her way through the Leipzig Art Academy as a product designer.

"Turn shit into gold and make it from scratch," says Wendel, who uses everyday objects to create extraordinary things – from painting to tailoring, coding to corsetry. While hit 1980s TV show star MacGyver's tool of choice was a Swiss army knife, Wendel (who also goes by McGyverova) prefers scissors, a needle and thread.

By creating nostalgic war-driven work that calls to mind Francis Bacon and David Lynch, Wendel has also created black-and-white collage works from oil, acrylic and newspaper on canvas, including a self-portrait which calls to mind Cindy Sherman.

Her breakthrough piece “Waffensalbe” 2011 was a performance premiered at the ACC Galerie Weimar, showing a handcrafted women’s space suit made from duct tape. Wendel’s most recent solo exhibition was in 2012 at the Leipzig art space, inbox93. A turning point in her work, from there on, Wendel freed herself from the obligatory paint brush.

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## **CAROLIN WENDEL**

### **Corsets**

Since 2013, Leipzig-based German artist Carolin Wendel started making corsets from her former cut-up acrylic and heavier oil-on-canvas paintings. By giving old paintings a new life, the pieces are transformed, reworked and sewn together with traditional corsetry techniques.

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