

IN DIALOGUE

Cardboard Fiction: The Work of Dosshaus

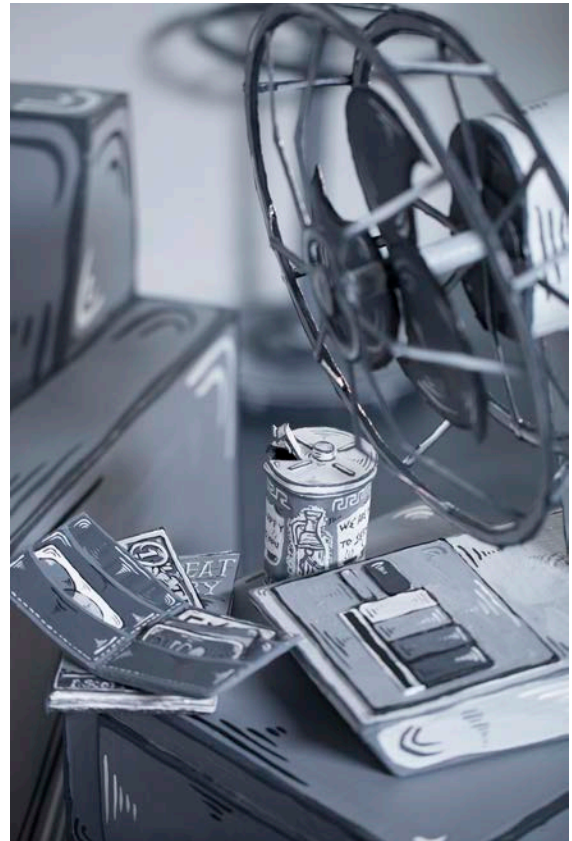
by Leora Lutz

During the height of the **Industrial Revolution**, the invention of paper packaging and later cardboard becomes a widely used material for the distribution and sale of consumer goods. In true appropriation form, artists such as **Picasso**, **Kurt Schwitters**, and later, **Cristobal Valecillos**, **Phranc**, and **Tom Sachs** have used cardboard as a conduit for dialog surrounding capitalism. Similarly, the Los Angeles based collaborative duo of **Zoey Taylor** and **David Connelly**—known as **Dosshaus**—create life-size sculpture fabricated from cardboard. Their practice conceptually examines social conditions, as well as the notions of “high” and “low” art.

This past April the duo mounted a life-size “hotel” inside **Corey Helford Gallery** in Los Angeles. *Paper Thin Hotel*, titled after a **Leonard Cohen** song, challenges viewers to inhabit the cardboard vignettes as if they are pages torn from a pulp-fiction novella. During August of this year, they created a huge sculpture that includes a giant coin, which appears to have fallen from the sky and landed on a grand piano, crushing it underneath. Titled *Path of Paradox*, the work is based upon **William Blake’s** engraving *Laocoön*: “Where any view of money exists art cannot be carried on, but war only.” They made the piece for the **Lucca Biennale** in Italy, an art festival dedicated entirely to artists working in paper and cardboard, now in its ninth year. Writer **Leora Lutz** interviewed Dosshaus via email while they were in Italy to ask a few questions about what inspires their art making.

In what ways does music and performativity influence your work?

Music is a huge part of what motivates us. Music is almost always playing in our studio while we’re working. It sets the tone and keeps the pace for us. Our tastes swing wildly depending on mood. The day may start with **Erik Satie**, segue into **The Clash**, and end on **The Lijadu Sisters**, with many side-routes along the way. One day could be all French *ye-ye*. One day could be all **[David] Bowie**. We like the same things, so anything is game.



For *Paper-Thin Hotel*, we were listening to a wide range of American music, from **Ma Rainey** to **Bo Diddley** to **Gram Parsons** to **The New York Dolls**. And, of course, lots and lots of **[Bob] Dylan**.

Tell me more about Dosshaus “the band.”

We collaborated with **John Mermis** (aka “**Long Gone John**”) and his **Sympathy For The Record Industry** label to create the world’s first and only record to be released [by a record label]





solely on cardboard. The project was our chance to explore the iconography of the music industry and the concept of packaging music. The double-7" single has four "songs" yet no music. Since we are visual artists and not musicians, we thought the imagery we created would allow the viewer to imagine music that would be better than any songs we could create.

How is photography important to your work?

We see our photography as an ancillary artwork that is as important to us creatively as our sculpture, painting, and performance. We always compose a master image of what we deem the "perfect moment" within the installation. This involves us in character within the world we've created.

What else have you been working on?

We've just completed post-production on our first feature-length film. The title is *The Magic Hours*, and it was a project we wrote, produced, directed, and edited together. We also appear in the film, as does the great **Peter Fonda**. It is part real-world fairy tale and part road movie. It was a great opportunity to add layers of color and narrative into the world of Dosshaus.

What are some things you are thinking about to expand this work, or perhaps objects and products that you would like to make?

We like to keep things fluid and let the spark of creativity determine what project we next undertake. We have an equal partnership where the only rule is: "It's not an idea unless it's both our idea."

All images: **Dosshaus Paper Thin Hotel** 2018, mixed media installation. Corey Helford Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. Images courtesy of the artists.

dosshaus.com

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