

## **Cathedral Mound, Diamond and the Dramaturgy of the Staircase**

### **Sarah Winchester Revisited**

Sarah Winchester (1837 - 1922) is famous for the architectural properties of her 160-room estate near San Jose, California.

Sarah Winchester, heiress to the Winchester fortune ("The Gun that Won the West"), suffered from paranoia based on feelings of guilt and personal misfortunes, and which found its expression in excessive construction activity, following her own designs.

10 years ago, Tina Born developed a spatial sculpture as part of an exhibit at the Laura Mars gallery in Berlin.

Tina Born will now take up, build upon and revise the myth of Sarah Winchester for the Berlin Weekly project space. In commonly available information sources, Sarah Winchester and her work, which is marketed as a tourist attraction, the "Mansion of Sarah Winchester," are treated as a curiosity, as the brainchild of a troubled and emotionally confused woman. In Tina Born's version of the story, formally based on a Wikipedia entry, the titular character becomes an autonomous actor, a traveler and contemporary witness inspired by the first abstract sculptures of Munich-based Swiss artist Hermann Obrist (1862-1927), drawn by her love for a German mineralogist to the mining town of Kolmanskop in German Southwestern Africa, experiencing the diamond fever and the town's downfall, sinking back into the sand of the Namibian desert. Born has Sarah Winchester chafe and revolt at the exploitation of the country and the violence employed by the German colonial power against the indigenous population, joining the African resistance movement of Jakob Morenga and Hendrik Witbooi, the so-called Hottentot revolt of 1904-1908 against the German occupiers.

Following the drawing of a black diamond, she travels through Southwestern Africa and the adjacent countries. In addition to her support for the indigenous resistance against their white overlords, Sarah Winchester begins to take an interest in the flora and fauna of southern Africa. She becomes particularly interested in termites and the cone-shaped termite mounds, which remind her of Hermann Obrist's tombs and her own "building craze." In Tina Born's version of Sarah Winchester's life story, the titular character dies in an African village near the city of Omaruru in the year 1922. Since then, an impressive termite mound grows on her grave, called "The Onduruquea Cathedral."

Tina Born, who travelled to Namibia in early 2014 on a travel grant, will present artifacts at Berlin Weekly representing the various life stages of the fictional Sarah Winchester.

Tina Born

### **Sarah Winchester Revisited**

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