

# The New York Times

**Luke Stettner at Kate Werble Gallery**

**Will Heinrich**

**February 20, 2019**

The centerpiece of Luke Stettner's third solo show at Kate Werble Gallery is a shoulder-high concrete sculpture, made in collaboration with Tim Bearnse, Will Cornwall and Maxwell Stolkin, that sits in the gallery's back room. It's a loose reproduction of a study carrel that the artist, currently based in Columbus, Ohio, remembers from high school in Englewood, N.J. – four conjoined desks forming an unmistakable swastika. Overlooking this piece from the wall is a found photograph in a kind of extended wooden viewing box that shows the artist's great-grandparents Siegfried and Erna posing on a balcony around 1937, shortly before they fled Germany. A Nazi flag waves in the background right between them.

The original study carrel, one assumes, wasn't intended to resemble the Nazi symbol, or to evoke shocked recognition in an American teenager whose relatives were exiled or murdered by the armies marching under it. But it *is* the same shape. Likewise, whoever took the photo of Siegfried and Erna surely didn't mean to frame them so neatly around the emblem that will shortly drive them out of their country – but there it was.

It's this gap between intention and meaning, or between the personal scrim through which each of us sees the world and the world itself, that "RI VE RR HY ME SW IT HB LO OD" goes on to elaborate with text pieces, collages and other family mementos. Some are thought-provoking, and some, like a tiny calendar page from 1939, are wrenching – on it, Mr. Stettner's maternal grandmother, who made it safely to America, crossed off the days waiting for her father, who didn't. But between them, the two swastikas in the gallery's back room really do say it all.