



## Franz Neumann, Saboteur

2011, Mixed media wall construction, collage, and Plexiglas  
17" w x 35" h x 4.5" d

**Collaborative team:** David Feinberg and Beth Andrews, with contributions from Neumann's children: Mike Newman, Claus Newman, and Nancy Newman, and from artists Rowan Pope, and Emily Weber.

Franz Robert Neumann was born in 1916 in a small German town to parents who openly opposed to the Nazi party. As a young person, Neumann himself spoke out against the regime, so much so that school officials labeled him as an "untrustworthy thinker." Later, while in medical school, Neumann was drafted into the German Air Force. The longer he served, the more he felt himself disintegrating, both physically and spiritually. He created a collage to depict this wasting process using pictures of himself in uniform, culminating in a hand drawn skull. This skull appears at the bottom of the artwork. In the Air Force, Neumann performed quiet acts of physical sabotage for which he was never caught. He also sabotaged morale by speaking out against Hitler and the Nazis, which led to him being court marshaled, sentenced to death, and transferred to a concentration camp. There, Neumann asked a friend, Willie Rosenthal, to paint him a picture of what it would look like if Willie were free. Willie painted a figure walking away, down an empty street, after a storm. A black and white copy of that painting appears on the central panel of the piece.

After the war, Neumann entertained American troops, playing the accordion in a big band. A poster advertising his act appears in the upper left corner; the shadow is then isolated and placed diagonally southeast of the poster. The shadow connects Neumann's poster to the adjacent image: Willie's self-portrait. The monkey that appears at the bottom it recalls Neumann's mocking of Hitler while in uniform. The family's favorite photograph of Neumann was recessed back, visible only as a reflection in a mirror. Glass and mirror fragments make reference to Kristallnacht, the night Nazis smashed the windows of synagogues and Jewish stores. In the lower left corner are fragments of porcelain, representing the teeth Neumann and his wife both lost when rifle butted.

Neumann eventually immigrated to the United States with his wife, Hilda, and his sons, Claus, Mike, and Tom, taking Willie's painting with them. Mike inherited Willie's painting; he hangs it close to the largest window in his house so that Willy is never far from freedom. The horrors of genocide do not end when the last witness dies. Its shock waves pass through the lives of the victims' children and of the children's children. Its depravity shapes their worldview in profound and far-reaching ways.

Watch the Video documentary on Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZVGChTpc-LmgceAhw1\\_ifg/videos?disable\\_polymer=1](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZVGChTpc-LmgceAhw1_ifg/videos?disable_polymer=1)