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Saturday's opening for 'The Unicorn' exhibition at The Transformer Station promises to be a surreal happening, like the show itself

By [Steven Litt, The Plain Dealer](#) Sep 03 2013

The newest exhibition at the [Transformer Station](#) gallery in Ohio City will invoke a mysterious medieval tapestry and the mutable quality of memory in an exhibition entitled "The Unicorn."



It all promises to be a highly conceptual experience worthy of extensive footnotes in Surrealism, medieval art and Algerian terrorism, among other topics.

That's also true of the opening itself. From 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday on the Transformer Station Lawn, pianists Emily Grabinski and Fangfei Chen will perform compositions by Stravinsky, Auric, Milhaud and Satie featured during various Surrealist brawls on Parisian stages in the 1920s.

At 4 p.m., actors will read excerpts of a play about a Surrealist fistfight in which Andre Breton caned Pierre de Massot, a dandy, poet and Trotskyite, and broke his arm. Presumably, this time around, no one will be hurt.

Organized by **Reto Thuring**, the Cleveland Museum of Art's associate curator of contemporary art, the show is not, as one might assume, named after the world-famous "**Unicorn Tapestries**" at the Cluny Museum in Paris.

It is instead named for "The Unicorn," a novel by the 20th-century German writer **Martin Walser**.

And yet, one of the works in the exhibition makes one of the aforementioned unicorn tapestries the jumping-off point for some rather suggestive-looking photomontages. So, actually, a strong reference to the "Unicorn Tapestries" is part of the package.

Got that straight?

"The Unicorn" will be the first exhibition in the Transformer Station organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art. As such, it's a key step in the evolution of a unique nonprofit exhibit space on the city's West Side.

Collectors **Fred and Laura Bidwell** of Peninsula bought, expanded and renovated a former streetcar transformer station at 1460 West 29th St. with the intention of using it as a space to display their noted collection of contemporary photography.

In 2011, the Bidwells announced that the Cleveland Museum of Art had formed a partnership in which it would take over the space for half of every year for 15 years, giving the institution its first off-site display space and its first presence west of the Cuyahoga River. The Bidwells will then donate the building to the museum.

After having organized the first two primary exhibitions since last February, the Bidwells are now handing over the keys to the museum for the fall season, so to speak.

The expectation is that the museum would use the Transformer Station to stage experimental exhibitions with a freer spirit than it could bring to its main complex in University Circle. The museum's debut offering in Ohio City seems to fit that bill.

Following the central theme of Walser's novel, which deals with the mutability of memory, the show will focus on how contemporary artists respond to notions of reconstructing the past.

The offerings will include an untitled film by Parisian native Neil Beloufa in which the former owner of an Algerian villa and a gardener try to reconstruct what happened inside the house after a terrorist group occupied it in the 1990s.

Martin Soto Climent of Mexico City will display photographs and diagrams inspired by the most enigmatic of the six Cluny Museum unicorn tapestries, entitled "A Mon Seul Desir," or "To My Only Desire."

Shana Lutker of Los Angeles will contribute an installation based on the setting of one of the Surrealist fistfights.

Finally, Haris Epaminonda and Daniel Gustav Cramer of Berlin will display selections from their "Infinite Library," a collaborative project in which they dismantle and rearrange picture books to fashion entirely new volumes.