



Munich, Salvatorplatz, view from north

## Streets Names Lights

### Concept for a Monument to Thomas Mann and His Family

The monument consists of an assembly of street signs named after members of the Mann family as well as streetlamps from those streets. The signs and lamps come from Munich, where Mann spent a majority of his life, but also from other cities and places related to the Mann family worldwide.

The internationality of the family is reflected in the signs and lights – beginning in Munich and radiating out to other cities in Europe, the USA, and South America – as well as the family's worldwide literary presence and significance. The arrangement is based on the topographical position of the individual cities in relation to one another and forms an imaginary map. The monument addresses the commitment to a specific place but also aspects of emigration, mobility and frequent change of place as well as transnational cosmopolitanism, for which the family can be regarded as a forerunner and example.

The point of departure is Munich, the center of the family's life for many years, where there are several streets and squares named after members of the family: Thomas Mann but also Erika, Klaus, Elisabeth and Golo. Some of these streets are located in less-frequented neighborhoods, new housing estates or on the periphery and thus have little presence in the collective memory. These street signs, together with the streetlamps to which they are attached, are brought to the center of the city and assembled as a group at the Salvatorplatz (Salvator Square), where they are more visible and come into contact with one another in a kind of „family reunion.“ At the same time, they refer back to their original locations so that the monument as a whole emphasizes its connection to urban structures.



#### Names

The name „Mann“ is always present on the street signs, revealing a great deal about the dominance of the family name over the individual members' first names. Take for example the abbreviation of „Elis. Mann - Borgese“: Elisabeth, in particular, was a very independent marine biologist and founding member of the Club of Rome.

A new sign will be created for Katia Mann, for whom no street has yet been named. This will make „Mrs. Thomas Mann“ more visible in relation to the city in which she was born and whose family – the Jewish Pringsheim family – like the Manns, lost their property and had to emigrate. Giving her a street name in the monument anticipates what would otherwise be a lengthy process. This mixture of reality and fiction references literary procedures practiced by Thomas and Klaus Mann.

The street signs are installed together with the streetlights. On the one hand, this corresponds to the situation found in many locations: the lamp pole serves as a mounting for the sign. Thus, the monument illuminates itself. On the other hand, the streetlamps are object-like, sculptural elements which differ in design, referring both to their places of origin and to differing time periods and styles from historicism to the present day. Through their dense accumulation, new configuration and dissimilarity, the lights bring a moment of strangeness and irritation into the urban space. They make a widely perceptible visual statement and generate a constantly changing image that can be viewed from multiple perspectives, including from the windows on the upper floor of the adjacent Literaturhaus (Literature House).



M-Bogenhausen, Thomas-Mann-Allee



M-Arnulfpark, Erika-Mann-Str.



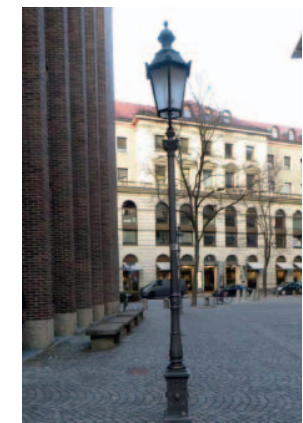
M-Arnulfpark, Klaus-Mann-Platz



M-Riem, Elisabeth-Mann-Borgese-Str.



M-Freiham, Golo-Mann-Weg



### Lights – Reference to Salvatorplatz and the Mann Family

The streetlights take into account the spatial situation of the Salvatorplatz, which is framed by the Neo-Renaissance facade of the Literaturhaus on one side and the brick facades of the nearby Salvatorgaragen (Salvator Garage) on the other, thus shady and little perceived as a square. The monument brightens up the space and accentuates it, meets the historical heaviness and pathos of the architecture and the massiveness and darkness of the garage with lightness and light. It blends into the existing ensemble by extending it up-wards, leaving the ground largely free for other temporary uses and provides illumination.

Within the „passage“ situation of the square, the monument creates a stopping point where the elements of writing, reading and light (also the association to desk lamps and reading lamps) come together. Writing appears in the form of street names and – quite deliberately – not quotations from literary works. Thus, the monument takes a different approach to Jenny Holzer’s nearby work OskarMaria and distinguishes itself clearly from it.

In addition, the streetlamps have a contextual reference to the well-known quotation „München leuchtete“ (Munich shines) from Thomas Mann’s novella *Gladius Dei*, which connects the family to the city. The setting of the narrative, a shop on the Odeonsplatz, is not far from the memorial site. And the quote, which is often cited as evidence of Munich’s cultural and literary significance, is related to something concretely urban like streetlights. As many of the lights do not come from Munich, the monument goes beyond the quotation.

The radiating effect of the Mann family is symbolized in the medium of „light,“ and the metaphorical designation of an outstanding personality as a „luminary“ or „lighthouse“ resonates. Indeed, the Manns – Thomas, but above all, Klaus and Erika – can be regarded as points of light or orientation, particularly in their upright political stance and their active-writing resistance against the Nazi regime and also with regard to their public engagement (see, for example, Elisabeth Mann on the protection of the seas).

The use of light refers to physical waves, vibrations and transmission processes and is evident in the interests and research endeavors of the extended Mann family, for example the work on quantum physics by Frido Mann (grandson of Thomas, son of Michael Mann). Lights and signs enter into a dialogue with each other due to their different construction and light temperature; the heterogeneity of the family under concurrent connections becomes clear.



Although there are existing artistic works which incorporate street lights, the references and context of their content is different, especially in the combination with the names they illuminate.

### Locations and realisation

Circa fifteen street signs and streetlights are planned. Some names appear several times (Thomas, Klaus and Golo Mann), a reflection of their respective literary significance. Nevertheless, the other members of the family, including Monika and Michael, are also represented in lamps that stand for the family's places of residence as a whole.

Two of the three lampposts on the Salvatorplatz are to be dismantled (south, center), so as not to disturb the ensemble. The third lamppost is to be moved and integrated into the monument and used as the support for the sign of Katia-Mann-Straße.

The „core“ of the ensemble is formed by a dense group of **Munich** streetsigns and lamps: Erika-Mann-Str., Klaus-Mann-Platz (Arnulfpark), Elisabeth Mann-Borgese-Str. (Riem), Golo-Mann-Weg (Freiham, extension 2019), Thomas-Mann-Allee (Herzogpark, near the family's former residence at Poschingerstr.).

Others demonstrate the range of the family's connections to Europe and North and South America as well as produce references.

A **Parisian** street sign (facade Salvatorgaragen, north) shows Thomas Mann's international political importance as one of the first writers to appear in France following the First World War in 1926.

A streetlamp and sign from Klaus-Mann-Platz in **Frankfurt** (the location of a monument to persecuted homosexuals) serves as a reference to an aspect of the identity of many members of the family, including Erika and Thomas Mann.

**Rome** is present with a streetlight and sign from the Via Thomas Mann and represents the residence of Thomas (and Heinrich) Mann at a young age (1897/98). In Rome, Thomas began his novel *Buddenbrooks*, which he then continued in Munich.

The South American link is represented by a streetlamp and sign from the Rua Thomas Mann in **São Paulo**. Thomas Mann's mother Julia came from Brazil – a fact he repeatedly referred to in texts, e.g. *Buddenbrooks*, and used to emphasize the contrast between North and South.

By contrast, another lamp comes from **Nida**, Lithuania in Northeastern Europe, from the front of the house that for years was the preferred summer retreat of the Mann family and is today a museum and cultural center.



Paris



Frankfurt



Rom



Rom



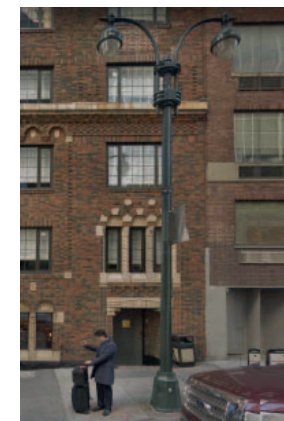
São Paulo



Nidden



Sanary-Sur-Mer



New York



Los Angeles

**Sanary-Sur-Mer** on the Côte d'Azur was the first place the family emigrated to in the 1930s. From there comes a lamp representing the family as a whole.

Two streetlamps come from the United States: one from **New York**, near the former Hotel Bedford, where Thomas and Katia stayed after their emigration to the USA (but also Klaus, Erika and Golo, Michael and Monika). Another from San Remo Drive in Los Angeles refers to the villa Thomas Mann built there in 1942, in which he lived until his return to Europe in 1952. In 2018, the villa was reopened as a cultural center under the auspices of the Federal Republic of Germany.

A streetlamp from **Kilchberg** near Zurich establishes a link to the address Alte Landstrasse 39, the residence of Thomas and Katia, also Erika, from 1952 onwards. A sign from the street in **Zurich** named after Erika furthers this link. Golo also lived in Zurich from 1965 to 1993. The link to him is established with a street sign and streetlamp from **Leverkusen**, where he died in 1994.

In procuring the streetlamps, structurally identical lamps from each location are to be used or replicated. In either scenario, the referential character of the monument to each corresponding location is retained. In instances where the street signs and lamps exhibit unique characteristics, the originals are to be transported to Munich and replaced by substitutes at the source location.

The positioning of the street signs reflects their original contexts; the signs refer to the direction of their re-spective streets, stand at different angles to each other and enter into dialogue.

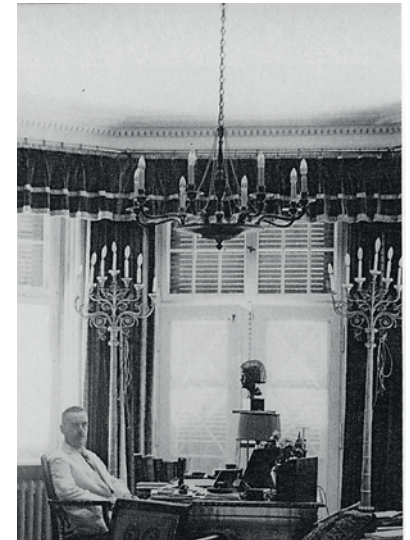
A commemorative plaque, created in cooperation with Thomas Mann experts, offers information on the monument as a whole, including short biographies, texts on the significance of the respective family members and places, pictures of the family (source: Monacensia) as well as photos of the individual locations (approx. 50 x 70 cm).

Research trips to the respective locations are part of the project, as is a book publication that documents, conveys and supplements the background and development of the monument, including the current situations of the street signs and streetlights on site.

Albert Coers, 2018



Zurich-Kilchberg



Studio of Thomas Mann



Mann family 1927, Munich

