

Foreword

Gebäude / Star

Building / Star

The small-scale, three-dimensional star made of folded paper is something I have had in mind for several years now as the basis of a sculpture project. In my collection of pieces of plastic, packaging materials, boxes, models and replacement parts, the distinctive form of the "Nordic Star" always stood out. This original figure consists of a flat, eight-pointed paper star with two braided stars sticking out on either side. The symmetry and tectonic precision of the form is today suggestive of a postmodern building.

While preparing an enlarged version of the "Nordic Star" and trying to find a suitable material in which to produce it, I came across the name of its creator: Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852). Froebel was born in Oberweissbach in Thuringia; among his many achievements, he developed theories on children's play and methods of exploring forms of beauty, life and knowledge; he also worked as a land surveyor.

In Germany, the paper star did not become known as the "Fröbelstern" (Froebel Star) until after the 1960s. In the English-speaking world it has also been called the "German Star", "Nordic Star", "Polish Star" or "Pennsylvanian Star". I am not quite sure what size Froebel imagined the star to be. In order to translate the found object into a sculpture, I had to redefine two of its properties: its size and the material used to make it, as only on a small scale does paper have the degree of stability required to hold the form. Sheet copper proved to be too soft, while high-grade steel was too inflexible for this undertaking. Only sheet brass was soft and stable enough to be folded and braided. The size chosen for the sculpture – around 85 cm in diameter – is derived from the static structure of the form. The material supports itself within the 48 folds it takes to make the star. For me, this structural problem, along with the interplay of model, object and sculpture, reveals interesting formal and contextual differences between architecture and sculpture.

Creating this sculpture would not have been possible without my father's involvement. Even after having produced an edition of eight stars, I still do not fully comprehend the individual steps involved in the folding process. I am deeply indebted to him for his valuable suggestions and advice: in the two years between finding the right material and completing the work, my father's recommendations proved crucial to the success of this project.

Thomas Scheibitz, 28 October 2008