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[game time](#)  
[live comments](#)  
[movie reviews](#)  
[national](#)  
[news](#)  
[podcasts](#)  
[posts in the pipeline](#)  
[reviews, features & interviews](#)  
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[talks](#)  
[the 3:00 book](#)  
[theoretically](#)  
[videos](#)

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## One minute speed read – Susan Hagen's tiny humans at the Center for Art in Wood

By [roberta](#)

July 1, 2013 · 0 Comments

[Susan Hagen's](#) carved and painted wood sculpture portraits are big personalities in tiny packages. A little over a foot tall, the teenager Olivia, for example, seems a fully-realized young lady. Her smile and stance suggest she is comfortable in her body and friendly, in spite of being a teenager! Hagen, says in this [video interview](#) that she is inspired by 15th Century German wood carver [Tilman Riemenschneider](#), whose quiet portrayals of saints and church patrons imply individuals with complex inner lives. Hagen captures a lot of the same naturalness and quietude in her works. Because she works in series or typologies — citizens of Philadelphia, soldiers, prisoners, teenagers — her works remind me in spirit of another German artist of more recent vintage, [August Sander](#), whose portrait photographs of farmers, soldiers, bakers, chefs, created an archive of a time and place ([images here](#)).



**Susan Hagen, Olivia, 2009, from the Teenager Project, Carved linden, woods, oils. 13x19 1/4'**

Like Sander, Hagen is a collector of people, fascinated with their nuances, their similarities and differences. She is always reverent to her subjects, and this is especially visible in her burnt wood statues of American soldiers in the Iraq war (2004-05) and the bleached wood tableaux representing prisoners of Eastern State Penitentiary (2006-07). More recent works, like the Teenager Project (2006-2012) present a lighter touch, although always serious and never rude or quizzical. Hagen's works are incredibly labor intensive and she is prolific. During the months of June and July, she has double shows open in Philadelphia — one at Schmidt Dean Gallery (**show extended through July 13**) and one at the Center for Art in Wood (up until July 20). Clearly the artist is smitten by humans and her labors are labors of love.

*Susan Hagen: Social Studies, Center for Art in Wood, to July 20, 2013.*

*Susan Hagen: This is Real/New Work about Life in Philadelphia, through July 13, Schmidt Dean Gallery  
Hagen will give an artist talk on July 11, 6pm-7pm, at the Philadelphia Art Alliance.*



Susan Hagen, Installation of Social Studies at Center for Art in Wood.



Susan Hagen, from the Teenager Project.



Susan Hagen, September. 2012, Carved linden, woods, oils. 15 3/4 x 13 x 9"



Susan Hagen, The band. Recollection Tableaux, in cellblock 7, Eastern State Penitentiary, 2007, figures are carved wood, bleached. furniture and other items are made from metal, wood, fabric and other.



Susan Hagen, Lost Army, 2005, hand-carved figures about 18" high. at Schmidt Dean Gallery, Philadelphia

**Tags:** carved wood figures, center for art in wood, one minute speed read, sculpture, statues, susan hagen

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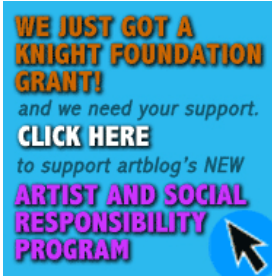
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October 2014  
September 2014  
August 2014  
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May 2014  
April 2014  
March 2014  
February 2014  
January 2014  
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February 2004  
January 2004  
December 2003  
November 2003  
October 2003  
September 2003  
August 2003  
July 2003  
June 2003  
May 2003  
April 2003

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