

MY OWN ZEISS STATIV XV

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A good microscopist never has too many microscopes, especially when an interesting one presents itself at the right price...

That is how I bought my latest acquisition. Paying a visit to one of my suppliers (who is about to retire), I was presented with an intriguing instrument. It looked like nothing I had ever seen before and my supplier could not provide me with any information regarding the type of microscope or its age. An engraving on the side of its base read “GENETICS, MCGILL”; I have done a great deal of work at McGill University and its Redpath Museum; the idea of owning a little bit of its history was appealing. The microscope came in



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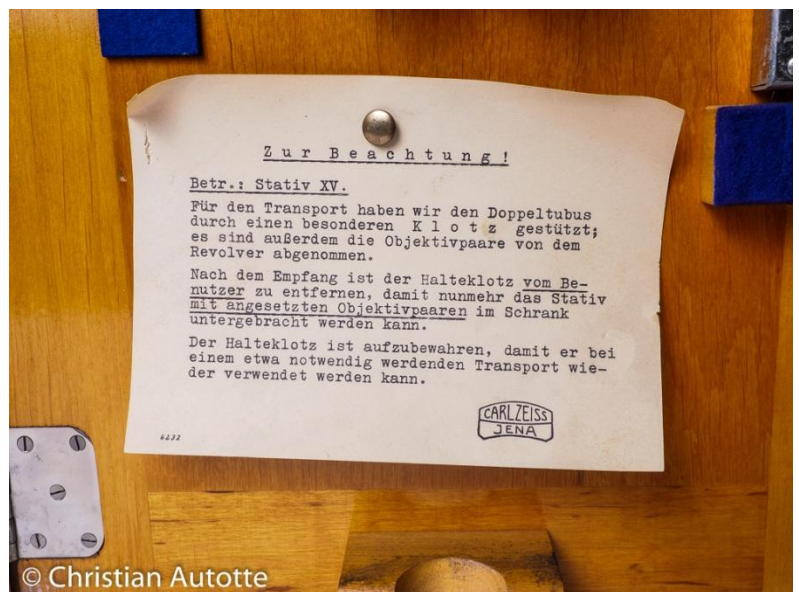
a classic wooden box, with extra eyepieces and hand rests. Then came the big question: How much? Since the chances of selling this oddity in the few weeks that his business will remain opened, he offered it to me for \$50. I could not resist...



There is some visible wear, some discoloration on the lens turret and on the tip of some lenses. The wooden box is also shows its age, and the door is missing its key. It doesn't have the power supply to light the lamp that sits in the middle of the lenses, but there is a mirror if one needs to light a subject from below. There is no way to move a slide mounted subject, but that was not meant to be, as we will see shortly.

Once home I took it out of the box and started looking for some information about its history. A note pinned on the inside of the door was the first clue. Written in German, I got it translated and it turned out to be instructions on proper safe transport. But more importantly, it gave me a name: Stativ XV, which translate as the Stand XV. A quick search on the Web produced an interesting result... a July 2002 article in Micscape: the part 3 of a series of articles by R. Jordan Kreindler. It was about various stereo microscopes from the nineteenth and twentieth century and mine was featured. I was especially interested by the following passage:

“The Zeiss Stand XV, c. 1930s, uses a standard-style, and quite large, quadruple turret with four pairs of objectives. As expected, this turret design on a stereo instrument makes the microscope's width significant, and gives it a unique and unmistakable appearance. **There were only 730 copies of Stand XV made between 1934 and 1942** (Gubas, 2008, 2012). In addition, some Stand XVs were destroyed during World War II, and lost to natural attrition over time, so this model is relatively rare.”



Armed with that information, I went back to the microscope. On the base of its binocular head was an engraving indicating that the microscope was imported by The Hughes Owens Co. Ltd. More research on the web revealed that this company was importing and distributing various optical instruments, as well as compass, slide rules, and other scientific apparatus. They were active from the early 1900's until their closure, December 22 1988.

I now had two important pieces of information: the microscope was manufactured between 1934 and 1942 and it was imported by a Canadian company. In all likelihood, no microscopes were imported from Germany during the War; therefore, my microscope had to be made between 1934 and 1939. Under the microscope's base plate is the serial number: 37.06.06.02. With the information at my disposal, I would surmise that my Stativ XV was made in 1937, possibly in June (06) of that year.



The Stativ XV was designed mainly as a dissecting microscope, hence the lack of a mechanical stage. The glass plate on which can be placed the subject under observation can be replaced with a metal one, if there is no need to illuminate from below. It is devoid of a fine focus control, something that is of limited use for a stereo dissecting microscope. The head is mounted on a vertical rod and a screw can be loosened to allow the head to go up and down, adjusting it to the size of the specimen being dissected. A pair of hand rest makes it more comfortable to use for extended periods of time.

The lenses are mounted in pairs. Their magnification are 2x, 4x, 8x, and 12x. While some Stand XV came with only a single pair of eyepieces, mine came with three sets: 8x, 12x, and 18 x. This combination then gives me possible magnifications from 16x to 216x.

In spite of its age this Zeiss is still fully functional. I may never use it as much as the more conventional instruments in my collection, but it will definitely occupy a special place in my heart, if only for its historical significance.





If you wish to read the original article by R. Jordan Kreindler, you can find it with a search on Micscape:

[Stereo Microscopy Stereomicroscopes: Part 3 - Microscopy-UK](#)

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