

GALLERY 1: Ann Toebe—*Churches*

GALLERY 2: Nadine Robinson—*Das Hochzeitshaus*

ON VIEW: May 1–June 7, 2008

OPENING RECEPTION: May 1, 2008, 5–8pm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Branch Gallery is pleased to present the work of two internationally recognized artists, Ann Toebe and Nadine Robinson.

Ann Toebe's exhibition, *Churches*, explores memory through the architecture of interior spaces. Drawing from such sources as Russian icon and medieval painting, Cubism, and folk art, Toebe considers the intersection of contemporary abstraction, symbolism, and the spaces of our collective pasts. The resulting paintings of Catholic church and suburban home interiors from Toebe's childhood convey the fragmented and personal nature of visual memory, while avoiding the romantic nostalgia that threatens to overwhelm investigations of the past.

Toebe's paintings of churches, for example, play with notions of memory through the use of color. While the interiors are depicted in shades of grey, the fragmented panes of the church windows are awash in vibrant color, highlighting the ecstatic qualities of light. The tension between the flatness of the interior and the vivid beauty of the stained glass might be seen as a translation of Toebe's own reconciliation of her adult atheism with her memory of these "sacred spaces"—those elements that retain their life and color in the grey field of memory. Likewise, Toebe's paintings of the seemingly banal spaces of her childhood family home are brought to life through the use of multiple perspectives and tonal color; the works give the viewer a sense of looking at each room through a kaleidoscope, and with no particular light source or perspective, these works become a patchwork of viewpoints, moments, and memories combined into one painting. As a result, each work has a sense of universalism that any viewer could relate to, as though the works tap into the collective American middle-class memory.

Toebe is based in Chicago. She received her MFA from Yale University in 2004 and attended the Universität der Kunst, Berlin from 2004–2005 as a DAAD scholar. Toebe's work has been exhibited in venues including The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Brooklyn Fire Proof Inc., Brooklyn, NY; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL; AfterModern, San Francisco, CA; and ArtSpace, New Haven, CT.

Nadine Robinson's installation *Das Hochzeitshaus* is an exploration of the orchestral music of human voices; mining popular myth, religion, art history, and street culture to create a hypnotic installation of pulsing sound and cool light. Originally commissioned by the ICA, Philadelphia, *Das Hochzeitshaus* relates to the artist's series of "Boom Paintings"—works which explore the nexus of esoteric visual expression and popular urban music culture. Other works in the series, such as *Alles Grau in Grau Malen*, exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2006, look to religious doctrines and prophecies of doom, combining the Wagner-esque sounds of revelatory classical compositions with the heavy, booming, body shaking bass of Rastafarian music. *Das Hochzeitshaus*, on the other hand, reaches towards the higher realms, in an exploration of transcendence.

A ten-foot-high pyramidal sculpture of white speakers sited in a narrow blue-lit space, *Das Hochzeitshaus* employs a soundtrack that combines recordings of Pentecostal glossolalia (speaking in tongues) with that of "unrestrained laughter", resulting in a visual and aural experience that is both a transporting and overwhelming odyssey of laughter, language, and ecstatic expression. That the work draws its title from the famed Wedding House in the German town of Hamelin, the birthplace of the Pied Piper myth, speaks again to the power of rapturous music and hypnotic speech. Visually, the work's references to minimalist sculpture and painting by such classic modernists as Robert Ryman, Ad Reinhardt, and Donald Judd are readily apparent; the insertion of the words and laughter into the discourse of Modernism seems to point to the very abstract nature of language. On the other hand, the towering speaker formation makes clear visual reference to "houses of joy"; informal boom box structures assembled during block parties in the artist's Bronx, NY childhood.

Robinson is based in Berlin and New York, and received her MFA from New York University, NY in 1997. She has had solo exhibitions at such venues as the Studio Museum in Harlem, NY; Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO; and the ICA, Philadelphia, PA. Likewise, her work has been included in exhibitions at The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX; the Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY; and the Salzburger Kunstverein, Austria, among other institutions.

For more information, please contact Teka Selman or Chloë Seymore at info@branchgallery.com or 919.918.1116.

Gallery Hours: Wed–Sat 12–6 or by appt.

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