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Curatorial Programs



HOMELAND [IN]SECURITY: VANISHING DREAMS

SEON GHI BAHK, MATTHEW BRANDT, JEFF BROUWS, BEVERLY BUCHANAN,
LEYLA CÁRDENAS, JAMES CASEBERE, WILL COTTON, LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER,
BEN GRASSO, STEPHANIE IMBEAU, MARY MATTINGLY, ADIA MILLETT, ANDREW MOORE,
CHEN QIULIN, DORIS SALCEDO, LOREN SCHWERD, ALEC SOTH, ROB STEPHENSON,
BRIAN TOLLE, CHRIS VERENE, AND MARION WILSON

Curated by Margaret Mathews-Berenson

September 7 – November 16, 2014

Opening reception: Sunday, September 7, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

“The ache for home lives in all of us...”

— Maya Angelou

The Department of Homeland Security, founded in 2002 in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, is charged with goals that are challenging to say the least. In addition to preventing acts of terrorism, it must enhance national security, manage our borders, secure cyberspace and ensure disaster resilience. This Fall, coincidentally, marks the anniversaries of 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy—two cataclysmic local events with global repercussions that remain with us still. Indeed, whenever we see or hear the familiar admonition: “If you see something, say something,” we are reminded of how a single day changed our lives forever. For its part, Hurricane Sandy has come to represent what might be in store for humanity as a result of climate change.

Taking the date of September 11, 2001 as a starting point, this exhibition seeks to examine the many man-made and natural disasters that have occurred since then, resulting in the crippling of global economies and an increase in homeless populations around the world. Religious and political conflicts, the near collapse and apparent fragility of the global financial system, a worldwide recession, nuclear disasters and a series of devastating tsunamis, earthquakes and hurricanes along with record droughts, wildfires, floods, and glacial ice melts all seem to occur with greater frequency in recent years. Any one of these calamities would be sufficient to challenge our sense of well-being, but together, they engender a sense of unrelenting universal fear and anxiety. In response, we experience an intense longing for safe haven, for home and security in a world that seems increasingly hostile and unpredictable.

While the contemporary artists in *Homeland [IN]Security* do not aspire to the overwrought grandeur of traditional history painting, they nonetheless call attention to myriad social, technological, climatic, and political issues resulting from tragic circumstances we experience first-hand or vir-



Brian Tolle *Old Glory*, 2008



Chris Verene *Amber and Her Girls are Living in Her Car*, 2006

tually through ever-present media. With 21st century connectivity, every global event is felt locally and vice versa.

While this exhibition presents images and impressions of natural and man-made disasters, many shown in heart-wrenching detail, it will also explore some of the innovative and thoughtful solutions being proposed to address the complex problems resulting from these tragic events. *Homeland [IN]Security* cannot claim to be comprehensive in presenting either the problems or solutions, although it is nonetheless intended to raise awareness of a multitude of issues that concern us all.

The notion of home as a fragile and ever more elusive symbol of safe haven has long been a subject of investigation for **Will Cotton**. *Abandoned (Churro Cabin)*, 2002, alludes to the sugary delicacies of the Candy Land board game that originally inspired his series of lusciously rendered landscape paintings while simultaneously, it is a sinister reflection on consumption, overindulgence and greed. His hand-built confections, baked from recipes he collects and adapts, are allowed to deteriorate as he paints the results of decay and neglect, commenting on utopian ideals of home as a place of refuge and contentment.

Ben Grasso's *Adaptation 5*, 2012, is a less subtle statement. His “dream house” rises upward toward the sky and bursts apart in a lurid explosion of dark crimson, pink and yellow accented shards, every frenzied brushstroke suggesting apocalyptic violence.

Brian Tolle takes aim at housing problems facing veterans returning from military service in *Old Glory*, 2008 and *Out of Service*, 2009. His longtime interest in the history of American domestic architecture led him to explore the planned community of Levittown, Long Island, which served as the archetype for suburban living, especially for American GIs returning home after World War II. Cast in



Matthew Brandt *160692138060*, 2012

silicone and painted to match the colors of the Levittown houses that Tolle photographed on site, his updated versions are depleted, limp and sagging, their flaccid presence a metaphor for the current housing market collapse and lost opportunities for today's disadvantaged or disabled vets.

Casting a spotlight on the economic hardships so commonplace in small town America, a number of artists offer a stark look at reality. **LaToya Ruby Frazier's** haunting black and white photographs of her ancestral home in Braddock, Pennsylvania, attest to the post-industrial decline of this Rust Belt town after the collapse of the steel industry.

Chris Verene transports us to his hometown of Galesburg, Illinois, a once prosperous farming community now suffering from economic hardship due to the closing of local factories and rising costs for farmers. In this series of color photographs from 2006 and 2007 we meet Amber, a single mother struggling to provide a home for her children. His handwritten captions: "Amber and her girls are living in her car" and "Amber got her kids back and now they live in an abandoned restaurant" are like notations in a treasured scrapbook. However, they reflect the bitter reality of homelessness echoed in the words of President Obama during his economic policy address at Galesburg's Knox College, July 24, 2013: "So these were stories of families who had worked hard, believed in the American Dream, but they felt like the odds were increasingly stacked against them. And they were right. Things had changed."¹

Like Verene's *Galesburg* series, **Matthew Brandt's** *160692138060*, 2012, offers dramatic evidence of the financial crisis with an image of a foreclosed home in hard-hit Lebanon, Kansas, listed on Ebay for \$5,600 presumably by desperate owners.² Downloaded from the Internet and printed in silkscreen using his own concoction of Winterfresh bubblegum as a medium, Brandt delivers a sly reference to the real estate bubble bursting.

In his series, *Sleeping by the Mississippi*, **Alec Soth** embraces the vernacular architecture of small town America, particularly those

along the Mississippi River.³ The series depicts decaying towns, people with broken dreams, and gritty, hardscrabble landscapes like that in *Luxora, Arkansas*, 2002. Here, Soth discovered a rundown campsite/homesite littered with debris and telltale liquor bottles. American flags deliberately placed in the midst of this scene may seem at first glance incongruous; yet they indicate pride of place regardless of reduced circumstances.

Andrew Moore exposes the tragic remains of *The Ferrel Place, Sioux County, Nebraska*, 2013, in his photograph of a dilapidated barn on a deserted homestead, another victim of economic decline in rural America.

Rob Stephenson's *Abandoned Home, Titusville*, 2014, speaks of the effects of the dissolution of the Space Shuttle program in 2012 on the local economy of this traumatized Florida town, where lay-offs and unemployment ended thirty years of prosperity. Inevitably, the population declined as younger residents and members of the



Beverly Buchanan *Hurricane House Series, South Florida*, 2008



James Casebere *Yellow Hallway #2*, 2001-2003



Rob Stephenson *Discarded Pew Cushions, Rockaway, 2013*

disillusioned middle class moved on.

Countless larger American cities have also suffered in recent years from urban decay, de-industrialization and the flight of inner-city residents to the suburbs and elsewhere seeking an improved quality of life. None, perhaps, has suffered losses on the same massive scale as Detroit, where tens of thousands of derelict houses, factories, hospitals, churches and even skyscrapers await demolition.⁴ Andrew Moore and **Jeff Brouws** eloquently expose this city's disastrous crumbling infrastructure. *Couch in the Trees, Detroit, 2008*, by Moore summarizes the urban blight that continues to afflict this fallen city that was once synonymous with American industrial might. Jeff Brouws' diptych, *Discarded Landscape #37, Abandoned Store and Demolished Home, Detroit, MI, 2008*, presents an abandoned store and adjacent house, both beyond repair.

The ravages of natural disasters have added to the increasing number of displaced and homeless people worldwide, prompting artists to comment. **Stephanie Imbeau** has been fashioning miniature houses since 1989 when Hurricane Hugo slammed through her parents' community in South Carolina, uprooting trees that fell through roofs causing homes to collapse.⁵ Since then, she has used an iconic house form rendered in a variety of media from clay and porcelain to layers of vellum stitched together with black thread. She deliberately chooses fragile materials to allude to temporality. Her sagging porcelain houses are especially haunting, each one clinging to a perilous existence—a community of lonely survivors.

The destructive power of flooding from devastating hurricanes features dramatically in the work of **Beverly Buchanan, Loren Schwerd, Rob Stephenson** and **James Casebere**. While James Casebere's *Yellow Hallway #2, 2001-2003*, depicts an elegant upscale entrance perilously inundated with water, Loren Schwerd's skeletal house forms are mere vestiges of what were once small shotgun houses in New Orleans' Ninth Ward, a largely poor African-American community badly damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Beverly Buchanan's *Hurricane House Series, South Florida, 2008*, was inspired by the many storm-ravaged homes she observed on her travels through poverty-stricken rural



Doris Salcedo *Istanbul Project I, 2003*

Florida. This derelict shack is a valiant survivor, despite being badly tattered with roof akimbo and windows missing. Rob Stephenson's *Discarded Pew Cushions, Rockaway, 2013* attests to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Sandy on this Long Island beach community.

Nature's wrath and human error were the cause of a vicious wildfire that claimed **Adia Millett's** parents' home in northern California in 1993. Started by a homeless man living in a nearby canyon, it quickly grew out of control, destroying over a hundred residences in the area. *Untitled (Bird Fire), 2014*, based on her memories of this tragedy, is a quiet homage to what once was there.

For **Doris Salcedo**, memory is at the heart of *Istanbul Project I, 2003*, a photograph documenting her installation at the Istanbul Biennale of 1,550 chairs filling a void between two buildings.⁶ Linked to a previous installation at the Palace of Justice in her native city of Bogotá, it commemorates the seizure in 1985 of the Supreme Court and its judges by a guerilla group; many of whom disappeared or were murdered. Though inspired to some extent by this specific incident, *Istanbul Project I* also acknowledges victims of war everywhere. The empty chairs bear silent witness to all those who have perished or are missing and to the families, homes and traces of everyday domestic life they left behind.

In **Marion Wilson's** installation, *Entering John Jamelske's House, 2007*, memory and violence of another kind are implicit. A blue weathered ranch house, though quite ordinary in appearance, was the setting for a kidnapping and rape of a 16-year-old girl in a small town outside of Syracuse, New York, just a mile from the artist's home. Her sculpture and video track the victim's ordeal, raising the

question: how safe are we in our own communities?

Government politics and public policies for development and urbanization have contributed to homelessness and displacement around the world. **Leyla Cárdenas** comments on the insidious nature of urban renewal in her native city of Bogotá where buildings are being razed, forcing residents from their homes to make way for new construction. Her color photographs, mounted on demolition debris and strewn haphazardly, are humble relics of forced modernization.

Chen Quilin's *Balconies* series of 2007 attests to the impact of urbanization in China. Growing up in one of the many villages that were demolished in the wake of the construction of Three Gorges Dam and now living part time in Beijing, she has witnessed the alienation experienced by millions of Chinese in rural communities and cities alike, where so many traditional homes have been replaced by anonymous large-scale development projects. Her tender balcony scenes represent the last vestiges of hope for those citizens who remain, clinging to home and memories of what they lost and waiting perhaps to be uprooted again.

Korean-born artist, **Seon Ghi Bahk**, uses charcoal—a commonplace element long associated with purification rites in his native country—as a symbol of reality and illusion, permanence and impermanence. In *Aggregation 11-10*, 2011, chunks of charcoal suspended from nylon threads form a disintegrating vertical frame that appears to be an open window, a mirror or a picture frame; its evanescent presence/non-presence alludes to memory of home, belongings and lives once lived.

In her photographs, *Towards a Heterotopia* and *Floating Populations*, both 2008, **Mary Mattingly** conjures up a post-apocalyptic world—a world in need of help. To

address the inevitable problems of homeless survivors, she offers protective clothing and a bicycle-powered barge, respectively. With the *Waterpod™ Project* launched in 2009 and *Triple Island*, 2013, both documented here in videos, she offers innovative and practical solutions to the dystopic future she envisions.



Mary Mattingly *Towards a Heterotopia*, 2008

Of course, many contemporary artists confront issues of global concern that are the focus of *Homeland [IN] Security*. Though their work is not included in the exhibition, Tania Bruguera, Mel Chin, Theaster Gates, Swoon, Rick Lowe, Krzysztof Wodiczko and a number of other artists offer thoughtful solutions through socially-engaged practices. Prominent architects such as Shigeru Ban have taken the lead in designing sustainable shelters for those in need following catastrophic events. In addition, a growing number of colleges and universities now offer art curriculums in social practice and museums have organized think-tank type programming to address social

ills. Throughout the world, government agencies, humanitarian groups, urban planners, and individual philanthropists have likewise taken action. While *Homeland [IN] Security* uses the occasion of this exhibition as a platform to focus on problems, it is also intended to inspire new thinking, new attitudes and perhaps even motivate viewers to support some of the many public-spirited organizations committed to making this troubled world a better place.⁷ ■

— Margaret Mathews-Berenson
New York, 2014

NOTES

1. Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on the Economy," Economic policy address, Knox College, Galesburg, IL., July 24, 2013. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/24/remarks-president-economy-knox-college-galesburg-il>
2. This foreclosed home was featured in an Ebay sale: http://www.ebay.com/itm/160692138060?ru=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ebay.com%2Fsch%2Fi.html%3F_sacat%3D0%26_from%3DR40%26_nkw%3D160692138060%26_rdc%3D1
3. Alec Soth's photographs from this series were published in: Anne Wilkes Tucker and Patricia Hampl, *Sleeping by the Mississippi: Photographs by Alec Soth* (Steidl Verlag, Göttingen, Germany 2004).
4. Monica Davey, "Detroit Urged to Tear Down 40,000 Buildings," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2014, pp. A1 and A15.
5. Stephanie Imbeau, interview with Margaret Mathews-Berenson, April 23, 2014.
6. Kenneth Baker, "Furnishing Assumptions," rev. of exhibition at Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, ARTnews, February 2007, p. 141.
7. A partial list of these organizations will accompany this exhibition as a hand-out

BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Mathews-Berenson is an independent curator and art educator with special expertise in contemporary art and photography. Former director of the Drawing Society and editor-in-chief of *Drawing* magazine, she is an accomplished lecturer and writer; her articles have been published in *ARTS*, *American Artist*, *The Pastel Journal* and *Sculpture* magazine, among others. Through her tour company, Art Today, she provides VIP and special-access tours of the contemporary art scene in New York and other cultural cities. She is currently on the faculty of the 92nd Street Y in New York.

CHECKLIST

SEON GHI BAHK
AGGREGATION 11-10, 2001
Charcoal, nylon threads
106 x 39 x 8 inches
Courtesy Zadok Gallery,
Miami

MATTHEW BRANDT
160692138060, 2012
Winterfresh chewing gum
on paper
30 x 40 inches
© Matthew Brandt, Courtesy
M+B Gallery, Los Angeles,
Private Collection

JEFF BROUWS
DISCARDED LANDSCAPE
#37, ABANDONED STORE
AND DEMOLISHED HOME,
DETROIT, MI, 2008
Archival pigment print
20 x 40 inches
Courtesy Robert Mann Gallery,
New York

BEVERLY BUCHANAN
HURRICANE HOUSE SERIES:
SOUTH FLORIDA, 2008
Acrylic and foam core
11 ¼ x 16 ½ x 8 inches
Courtesy Jane Bridges,
Ann Arbor

LEYLA CÁRDENAS
PERMUTATIONS, (STUDY
#3), 2014
Hand-cut glicée prints mount-
ed on demolition debris
Dimensions variable
Courtesy Casas Riegner,
Bogota

JAMES CASEBERE
YELLOW HALLWAY #2,
2001-2003
Digital chromogenic print
mounted to plexiglass
71 ¼ x 89 ¼ inches
© James Casebere, Courtesy
the artist and Sean Kelly
Gallery, New York

WILL COTTON
ABANDONED (CHURRO
CABIN), 2002
Oil on linen
60 x 60 inches

BRITTLE HOUSE STUDY,
2000
Ink on paper
26 ½ x 25 ½ inches (framed)
Courtesy the artist

LA TOYA RUBY FRAZIER
SELF PORTRAIT IN GRAMPS
BEDROOM (227 HOLLAND
AVENUE), 2009
Gelatin silver print, mounted
on archival museum board,
wooden frame
25 ½ x 29 ½ inches (framed)

**FIFTH STREET TAVERN
AND U.P.M.C. BRADDOCK
HOSPITAL ON BRADDOCK
AVENUE, 2011**
Gelatin silver print, mounted
on archival museum board,
wooden frame
25 ½ x 29 ½ inches (framed)

Courtesy the artist and Michel
Rein, Paris/Brussels

BEN GRASSO
ADAPTATION 5, 2012
Oil on canvas
50 x 70 inches
Courtesy Thierry-Goldberg
Gallery, New York

STEPHANIE IMBEAU
UNTITLED (SEWN 12), 2012
Ink and thread on vellum
24 ¾ x 19 ¾ inches

UNTITLED (COVER/
UNCOVER 9), 2013
Porcelain
10 x 9 x 7 inches

UNTITLED (COVER/
UNCOVER 8), 2013
Porcelain
4 ¼ x 9 x 10 inches

UNTITLED (COVER/
UNCOVER 17), 2014
Porcelain
4 x 3 ¼ x 6 ½ inches

UNTITLED (COVER/
UNCOVER 20), 2014
Porcelain
3 x 5 ½ x 4 inches

Courtesy the artist

UNTITLED (COVER/
UNCOVER 24), 2014
Porcelain
2 ¾ x 4 ½ x 3 ¼ inches
Collection of Kelly McRae and
Matt Castelein

MARY MATTINGLY
FLOATING POPULATIONS,
2008
Chromogenic dye coupler
print mounted to dibond
25 x 50 inches

TOWARDS A HETEROTOPIA,
2008
Chromogenic dye coupler
print mounted to dibond
30 x 30 inches

© Mary Mattingly, Courtesy
Robert Mann Gallery, New
York

WATERPOD (STOCKYARD
INSTITUTE)
Video

Courtesy the artist

ADIA MILLETT
UNTITLED (BIRD FIRE), 2014
Wood, plastic and taxidermy
bird
36 ¼ x 36 x 1 ½ inches

BLIND PREMONITION (BED),
2007
C-print
18 x 24 inches

Courtesy the artist and Mixed
Greens, New York

ANDREW MOORE
THE FERREL PLACE, SIOUX
COUNTY, NEBRASKA, 2013
Archival pigment print
45 x 34 ¾ inches

COUCH IN THE TREES,
DETROIT, 2008
Chromogenic print
45 ½ x 54 ½ inches

From the Series *Dirt Meridian*
© Andrew Moore, Courtesy
the artist and The Yancey
Richardson Gallery, New York

CHEN QIULIN
BALCONIES #1, 2007
Mixed media (fiberglass,
wood, with small pieces of
clothing and furniture)
18 ½ x 29 ½ x 9 7/16 inches

BALCONIES #4, 2007
Mixed media (fiberglass,
wood, with small pieces of
clothing and furniture)
18 ½ x 29 ½ x 9 7/16 inches

BALCONIES #5, 2007
Mixed media (fiberglass,
wood, with small pieces of
clothing and furniture)
18 ½ x 29 ½ x 9 7/16 inches

BALCONIES #9, 2007
Mixed media (fiberglass,
wood, with small pieces of
clothing and furniture)
18 ½ x 29 ½ x 9 7/16 inches

Courtesy the artist and Beam
Contemporary Art, New York

DORIS SALCEDO
ISTANBUL PROJECT I, 2003
Framed piezo-pigment on
Hahnemühle German
etching paper
30 x 23 ½ inches
Courtesy the artist and
Alexander and Bonin,
New York

LOREN SCHWERD
GORDON STREET, 2008
Wire, fiberglass screen,
synthetic wig
10 x 12 x 10 inches

ARC, 2008
Human hair, fiber glass screen,
wire
20 x 14 x 40 inches

Courtesy the artist

ALEC SOTH
LUXORA, ARKANSAS, 2002
Framed digital chromogenic
print
41 x 51 inches (framed)
© Alec Soth, Courtesy the
artist and Sean Kelly Gallery,
New York

ROB STEPHENSON
ABANDONED HOME,
TITUSVILLE, 2014
C-print
20 x 24 inches

DISCARDED PEW CUSHIONS,
ROCKAWAY, 2013

C-print
20 x 24 inches

Courtesy the artist

BRIAN TOLLE
OLD GLORY, 2008
Found wheelchair, platinum
silicon rubber
36 x 24 x 36 inches

OUT OF SERVICE, 2009
Crutches, silicone rubber
60 x 36 x 24 inches

Courtesy the artist and
CRG Gallery, New York

CHRIS VERENE
AMBER GOT HER GIRLS
BACK AND NOW THEY
LIVE IN THE ABANDONED
RESTAURANT,
2007
Chromogenic print with
handwritten caption in oil
30 x 36 inches

AMBER AND HER GIRLS ARE
LIVING IN HER CAR, 2006
Chromogenic print with
handwritten caption in oil
30 x 36 inches

Courtesy Postmasters Gallery,
New York

MARION WILSON
ENTERING JOHN JAMELSKE'S
HOUSE, 2007
Video, cast resin, wood
30 x 40 x 10 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Frederieke Taylor Gallery

Please Note: A playlist accompanies the iMovie in the Project Space and a gallery hand-out (also online) includes a list of some of the organizations dedicated to solving problems of homelessness and displacement worldwide, which this exhibition seeks to address.

Cover: **Ben Grasso** *Adaptation 5*, 2012

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the individual artists whose work is included in the exhibition, I would like to thank the galleries and their capable staffs for so kindly assisting with loans as well as with the many questions about the works of art and the experiences of the artists who created them. These important insights have been essential in making this exhibition more meaningful. I am especially grateful to Lowery Sims, Curator, Museum of Art and Design, New York, for her thoughtful recommendation of the work of Beverly Buchanan; and to Andrea Bejarano of Zadok Gallery in Miami for the many conversations we had virtually and in-person about the work of Korean artist, Seon Ghi Bahk. And it has been a special pleasure to work directly with so many of the artists, including: Will Cotton, Leyla Cárdenas, Mary Mattingly, Adia Millett, Stephanie Imbeau, Loren Schwerd, Rob Stephenson, Brian Tolle, and Marion Wilson, with whom I was privileged to have in-depth conversations and/or studio visits that deepened my understanding of their work. Jane Bridges also provided insightful information about the artist, Beverly Buchanan. Gallery staff members who were particularly helpful include: Carolyn Alexander, Matthew Flaherty and Ari Egas at Alexander and Bonin; Josie Brown at Beam Contemporary; Carla Chammas at CRG Gallery; Alice Joubert at Galerie Michel Rein; Cecile Panzieri and Lauren Kelly at Sean Kelly; Shannon Richardson and Jeannie Choi at M + B Gallery; Caroline Wall and Sophie Forman at Robert Mann; Steven Sergiovanni and Heather Bhandari at Mixed Greens; Magda Sawon of Postmasters; Walker Waugh at Yancey Richardson; and Ron Segev at Thierry-Goldberg. I am deeply indebted to my assistant, Allison Peller, for her collaboration, support and enthusiasm that made this exhibition possible. Her vision and technical expertise—learned on the job while producing the iMovie that accompanies the exhibition—contributed enormously to making my dream a reality. Finally, I wish to thank the entire staff of Dorsky Gallery: Noah, David and Karen – the mighty triumvirate of Dorskys who make the gallery program so special; Chelsea Cooksey, Registrar extraordinaire; and Deborah Rising who designed the handsome brochure that accompanies the exhibition. It has been a pleasure and privilege working with all of you.



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