

Press information

**Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller: *The Murder of Crows*
commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary
presented from March 14 to May 17, 2009 at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin**

From March 14 to May 17, 2009 the Berlin Museum für Gegenwart – Hamburger Bahnhof presents the largest sound installation to date by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary for the Sydney Biennale 2008. With *The Murder of Crows*, the Canadian visual artists continue the explorations they embarked on in the mid-1990s into the sculptural and physical attributes of sound. In the otherwise empty historical hall of the Hamburger Bahnhof, 98 loudspeakers are installed. These emit the sounds of voices, music and soundscapes generated by special stereophonic recording and replay techniques, creating a composition that has a direct physical impact on the listener. The installation is conceived like a film or a play, but one whose images and narrative structures are created by sound alone. The three-part work, composed in collaboration with Freida Abtan, Tilman Ritter and Titus Maderlechner, is 30 minutes long.

The installation's title, *The Murder of Crows*, refers both to the English term for a flock of those birds and to the strange occurrence known as a 'crow funeral': when a crow dies, many other crows converge around the body and caw, perhaps in lament, for over 24 hours. Another central reference is the etching *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* by Francisco de Goya from the series *Caprices* (*Caprichos*, 1799). In this suite of etchings, Goya, in the spirit of the enlightenment, took a critical look at tyranny, ignorance and superstition. In an epoch characterized by political and social upheavals, wars and insurrections, he warned: "Imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters."

In the installation by Cardiff & Miller, one hears Janet Cardiff's voice, coming from a megaphone on a table at the center of the room, relating thoughts and dreams. Like Goya's sleeping man, she is a captive of her own nightmares, experiencing dreadful scenes fraught with fear and terror. Sounds and noises roam the space of the exhibition like the owls and bats that flit around the sleeper in Goya's etching. The sound piece becomes a requiem for a world that has lost its bearings, where a dearth of reason has brought forth unimaginable atrocities, madness, and catastrophe.

Janet Cardiff, born 1957, and George Bures Miller, born 1960, live and work in Berlin and Grindrod, British Columbia, Canada. Together they work at the border zone of visual art, audio art, film and theater. In their installations, they explore the affective impact of sound and its influence on our perception and experience. And so the listener, the exhibition visitor, effectively becomes a protagonist in their audio-visual stagings, as with the sound and video walks they have created for numerous exhibitions around the world since 1995.

Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller: *The Murder of Crows*

Commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

Press preview: Thursday, March 12, 2009, 11:00 am

Opening: Friday, March 13, 2009, 8:00 pm

Duration of exhibition: March 14 – May 17, 2009

Opening hours: Tue-Fri 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, Sat 11:00 am – 8:00 pm, Sun 11:00 am. – 6:00 pm

Location: Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof

Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin / Historical Hall

Invalidenstr. 50-51, D-10557 Berlin

A project by Freunde Guter Musik Berlin e.V.

Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin

and Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna

as part of the series of “Works of Music by Visual Artists”

In collaboration with MaerzMusik 2009 | Berliner Festspiele.

Curated by Ingrid Buschmann und Gabriele Knapstein

Made possible by funding from Hauptstadtkulturfonds and Canada Council for the Arts.

With support from Bowers & Wilkins Speakers and Canadian Embassy, Berlin.

With thanks to Biennale of Sydney 2008, Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin,

and Luhring Augustine, New York.

Information

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Vienna, February 27, 2009