

VISUAL ARTS

A too-muted 'Silence'

Race riot works less than stirring

By CATHERINE FOX
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Artists have a special relationship with — and perhaps a responsibility to — history. Both Picasso, who famously crystallized war's suffering and moral outrage in "Guernica," and contemporary artist Dinh Q. Lee, who wove strips made from photos of Khmer Rouge victims into a wall-size suggestion of a traditional grass mat, took up the role of artist as memory keeper, as the voice of the silenced.

Not surprisingly, Atlanta artists felt called to participate in the city's remembrance of the Atlanta race riot on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. Unfortunately, most of those in "What Color the Dawn: Breaking the Silence on the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot" at Eyckrum gallery did not rise to the occasion.

The work on view is a compendium of familiar strategies deployed in artful but predictable ways. The altar, for example, replete with burning candles. Or the political collage, juxtaposing symbols of America with iconic evidence of racist depravity. And it's not just the strategies recycled but not transcended. It's also the reliance on the power of oft-used imagery — the iconic photos of a slave's scared back and the horrific lynching postcards — to do the work of engaging the viewer.

I don't mean to imply that the art should have illustrated this ignominious moment in Atlanta's history like an old-fashioned historical painting, or that calling up the ghosts of slavery and other iniquities is not relevant. Nor am I suggesting that the artists aren't expressing a heartfelt response. But it seems to me unimaginative or a bit lazy to bring out the old tropes, or old pieces (one dates from 1995). Contrary to the portentous title, "Breaking the Silence," most of the work bears little relationship to the event at all. Instead the show is, well, generic — as if pulled from a file titled "race injustice" or maybe "memorials."

One exception is "The Final Race," a refreshingly off-the-wall "ciné-essay" by Robert Chatham and Chea Prince. The video is part mock-doc (using stills from the race riot) and part free-wheeling association connecting race and religion. Though sometimes pedantic and gratuitously provocative, the artists clearly gave the subject thought and found an imaginative way to treat it.

REVIEW

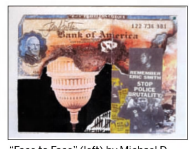
"What Color the Dawn: Breaking the Silence on the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot"

Through Sept. 30, Noon-5 p.m. Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays. Eyckrum, 290 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, 404-522-0655, www.eyckrum.org.

Verdict: Disappointing.



"Sacred Grove" by Tony Bingham.



"Face to Face" (left) by Michael D. Harris and "Remember Eric Smith" (above) by Theodore A. Harris.

Photos by KIMBERLY SMITH / Staff

Q&A / STAN WOODARD

'A chance to think about things differently'

By KIRSTEN TAGAMI
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Atlanta artist Stan Woodard began thinking about the 1906 Atlanta race riot earlier this year, as preparations to mark its 100th anniversary began. The Sept. 22-24 rioting, which left at least 25 blacks and two whites dead, sprang from white fears of African-Americans' increasing economic and social power, inflammatory statements by white politicians and rumors of a black crime wave. Woodard decided not to dwell on those events but to consider the impact, good and bad, that African-Americans have had on American society since then.



Woodard

His first solo show, "I See No One, No One Sees Me," opens Sept. 21 at Spruill Gallery in Dunwoody. He talked with the AJC about the images and objects — and aims — of his show.

Q: Where does the name of your show come from? It brings to mind Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man."
A: It actually started with me thinking about the aggressive jaywalkers we have in Atlanta, the people who drag [themselves] across the street. ... I'm amazed at how pedestrians aren't visible here. It also goes along with what's happening in the [exhibit's] second room, which is about material culture. I've seen a lot of black artists do shows about "bling" and the second gallery is kind of my bling show. Relying on material things for status is a way to hide.
Q: What's your goal in having people pick from among images of influential African-Americans to project on the wall?
A: I'm hoping it will just give people a chance to think about things

differently. I hope that people will re-approach their assumptions about blacks in America.
Q: Some are better known than others. Everyone knows what the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. looked like, but how many would recognize [activist and writer] Angela Davis, for example?
A: There will be a book with all the images and a brief bio of each person. I'm hoping it ... gives people an opportunity to learn. ... For me, it really has been a learning activity. At first, I was thinking, "How am I going to get 100 African-Americans who really have had an effect on society?" ... But as I started putting together my list, I was pleased to find a lot of influential people in politics, law, policy-making, science, art.
Q: You have accomplished public figures such as Bill Cosby and Colin Powell, then you have a lynching victim.
A: I have O.J. Simpson, who went

from one of the most beloved people in the white community to one of the most hated in the country, period, black or white, for a crime he wasn't convicted of. ... I have Louis Farrakhan, who is not necessarily a positive figure. Even someone like Condoleezza Rice is a little controversial. She's not doing anything to hurt the black community, but she's not doing anything to help, either.
Q: Who are some of the less well-known people you've included?
A: Some really interesting ones are classical composer William Grant Still [the first African-American to conduct a major American orchestra], and Matthew Henson, who was on the Peary expedition to the North Pole in 1909 [and believed to have been the first American to reach the North Pole].
 "I See No One, No One Sees Me" Thursday through Nov. 4, Spruill Gallery, 4681 Ashford Dunwoody Road, Atlanta. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays. 770-394-4019.

Well-crafted vessels take humor along for ride

By JERRY CULLUM
For the Journal-Constitution

In the earliest sculpture in Kerry Moore's show, a door on wheels represents Rod Serling's house. Actually, the door and tricycle in 1987's "Corner of Dayton and Stafford, 1955" refer to the house in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where Moore spent his childhood. It had been Serling's residence sometime before Moore's parents bought it.

But the coincidence suits the sense of "Twilight Zone"-ness in Moore's witty, intelligent group of sculptures. Their exactitude and humor deserve to be better known. Though he teaches regularly at Emory University, and one work here is usually on display at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Moore exhibits infrequently.

"Trouble in Tucson" (1989) shows Moore in surrealist mode. A meticulously crafted sculpture of a rowboat (too large to be called a miniature) sits in a dry-dock cradle. The boat is filled with gravel.

Moore explores a whole series of encumbered or engaged objects. His next boat, an untitled work from 1990, is 6 feet long, nearly large enough to be functional.

REVIEW
"Kerry Moore: Sculpture"

Through Oct. 7 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, noon-4 p.m. Saturdays. Gallery talk 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 28. \$5,000-\$10,000. Emory University Visual Arts Gallery, 700 Peachtree Creek Drive, Atlanta. 404-727-6315. www.visualarts.emory.edu.

Verdict: Something of a retrospective. Moore's show is a must-see.

However, it hangs inside a completely enclosing framework that ensures it will never be put to use.

Thereafter, we are in the world of miniature objects, but ones that will never be confused with model-making. "Bound Dory" (1995) is a wooden boat tied with cords to its dry dock and filled with miniature metal buckets of transparent-resin "water."

Similar buckets support the stranded rowing-team craft in 1991's "Nine Tenths of the Law." The injury of its immobility is reinforced by insult: An exercise-gym rowing machine sits atop it. Multiple metaphors of containment

and explosiveness are at work in a 2000 sculpture of a 1945-style atomic bomb, hanging in the upper part of a house frame. The bomb is accessible by a flight of stairs.

The diving board in a more recent work has been rendered useless by too much access. A ladder extends from its end to the water below, so the only way to use it is to climb one ladder to the board and (shamefacedly, one supposes) climb down the other into the pool.

All the works in this four-part 2003-2005 piece are constructed in open suitcases, ready to go but not going anywhere. A miniature rowboat, Moore's most amazing-yet-crafted boat to date, lies half-sunken in transparent-resin water amid cattails. The Wright brothers' 1903 airplane fills a surrounding house frame, like some even more misguided version of building a boat in the basement. A courthouse facade sits on a sand bed.

Moore's allegories of ventures gone awry offer more messages each time you return to them. But from the first moment on, they're seductively funny.



Untitled, 2005, by Kerry Moore.