



South Carrollton Avenue, from the series "The Offing"

Date
2012

Primary Maker
Casey Ruble

Medium
Paper collage

Description

The artist Casey Ruble creates intricate paper collages that depict locations of particular historical significance—typically, a significance that has been forgotten or erased. The artist writes that her collages are “imbued with a psychological tension that hints at a charged history.” Her work begins not in the studio but with extensive historical and archival research, even before she visits a site. She then documents the physical environment through photography, attempting to capture its current atmosphere. Once she has selected one of the images—not always a noteworthy one, often quite mundane—on which to base her collage, she uses an X-Acto knife to cut out numerous pieces of solid-colored paper, which she then layers on top of one another to build up the composition from the background. To place the pieces, many of which are extremely small, Ruble frequently uses surgical tweezers. South Carrollton Avenue is from a series called “The Offing,” made between 2012 and 2014. All the works in the series depict locations in New Orleans, where the artist lived

in the mid-1990s; in contrast to their often vivid colors, the images touch on the displacement of bodies—both living and dead. South Carrollton Avenue depicts the site of an orphanage that no longer exists, and other collages in the series depict exhumed cemeteries and places where murderers hid the bodies of their victims. This collage is one of a number by Ruble that were included in the Wellin Museum’s Fall 2013 exhibition *A Sense of Place*. It was subsequently purchased for the collection with funds donated by David Nathans, Class of 1972 (former director of the Emerson Gallery), and Michael E. Shapiro, Class of 1971, H2016, in honor of Lettie Tourville, a dedicated Hamilton College employee who supervised the Root Art Center for over a decade and also worked at the Emerson. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, *INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS*, 2017) From the series “The Offing”. Based in New Orleans, where the artist once lived, depicts disinterred or built-over cemeteries, murder-victim body-drop sites, and former orphanages. The works investigate the displacement of bodies at the beginning of life and after death. Many of these places show no sign of their complicated past, bringing to light the essentially transient nature of most spaces. The artist employs a labor-intensive process in which every element - no matter how small - is made from cut paper. “By depicting seemingly innocuous locations with a heightened degree of specificity,” Ruble says, “I allude to deeper, disquieting narratives.” Each intimate collage has a specific palette inspired by the feeling of the place, and the often-discordant colors act to accentuate a sense of tension in the works.

Dimensions

Sheet: 8 7/8 × 5 3/4 in. (22.5 × 14.6 cm) Frame: 13 3/8 × 10 1/2 × 3/4 in. (34 × 26.7 × 1.9 cm)