



# BARBARA CHASE-RIBOUD: THE MONUMENT DRAWINGS

June 22 - September 5, 1999

***Barbara Chase-Riboud: The Monument Drawings***, a series of 23 original works by the American artist, novelist, and poet, will be on view in the North Mezzanine Gallery of The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Lila Acheson Wallace Wing.

The exhibition is organized by the St. John's Museum of Art, Wilmington, North Carolina. It will travel next year to the African American Historical Museum in Philadelphia and to the Diggs Gallery of Winston-Salem University in North Carolina.

Each image combines a variety of techniques and media: etching, drypoint, charcoal, and charcoal pencil and pen and ink on paper. The series was conceived by Chase-Riboud as hypothetical, large-scale public monuments that serve as homages to various political, cultural, and artistic figures and forces. The suite constitutes the first major body of Chase-Riboud's graphic work to be shown in the United States in more than two decades.

Elements of Chase-Riboud's signature work — classicism, archaeology, European Baroque, and poetic narrative — converge in ***The Monument Drawings***, weaving together a wide range of ideas, interests, and motifs to form a complex unity. In nearly all of the drawings in this series the artist also incorporates a mysterious, illegible script that alludes to her poetry but dispenses with specific meaning or content.

## **About the Artist**

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Chase-Riboud was graduated from Temple University and received a Master's degree in Design and Architecture from Yale University, where she studied under Josef Albers, Vincent Scully, Philip Johnson, Louis Kahn, and Alvin Eisenman. A resident of Paris and Rome, she has exhibited her work in museums and galleries throughout the world and has

been published as a poet and author. Her 1979 book *Sally Hemings*, an historical perspective on Thomas Jefferson's relationship with his slave, Sally Hemings, won the Janet Heidinger Kafka prize for best novel written by an American woman that year. Ten years later, after winning the Carl Sandberg prize as best American poet in 1988, she published *Echo of Lions*, recounting the Amistad slave revolt and its subsequent Supreme Court decision.

Having received a Knighthood in Arts and Letters from the French government in 1996, Chase-Riboud was awarded the 1998 Design Award for best art in a federal building by the United States General Services for her monumental, 18-foot sculpture installed in the interior of the federal building at 290 Broadway in New York. This commission grew out of the discovery that an 18th-century African American burial ground exists under this site.

One drawing in ***The Monument Drawings*** exhibition, *Foley Square Monument*, is of a gateway similar to those on Etruscan tombs, alluding to a passageway to the underworld appropriate for a burial ground. The actual memorial, however, is a Nike, a figure atop a sculpted base that combines a boat with an African headrest and is entitled *Africa Rising*. The Metropolitan Museum venue will include drawings related to *Africa Rising*.

### **Publication**

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue written by Anthony F. Janson, Chair of the Art and Theater Department at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, and published by the St. John's Museum. It will be available in softcover (\$18.95) in the Museum's bookshop.

In October, *Barbara Chase Riboud: Sculptor*, a survey of the artist's drawings and sculpture, will be published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., and in September, St. Martin's Press will re-publish *Sally Hemings*, followed by *Echo of Lions* early next year.

***The Monument Drawings*** at the Metropolitan Museum is organized by Lowery Stokes Sims, Curator in the Museum's Department of 20th Century Art.

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June 15, 1999

**Print**

## Press resources