

STORY DRESSES

CAROL HAMOY
STORY DRESSES
TALES OF IMMIGRATION,
CONFIRMATION, & PARTICIPATION

AUGUST 27–OCTOBER 6 2007

Reception
Sunday Sep 16, 3-5 pm

The year 2007 will be remembered as the moment when feminist art was given its long-withheld recognition, that its immeasurable influence on contemporary art and culture could no longer go underestimated. The Museum of Modern Art's "Feminist Future" symposium kicked off the year, and major exhibitions dedicated to women artists blossomed in its wake. It is in light of this recent activity that the Westchester Community College Fine Arts Gallery mounts *Story Dresses*, featuring the works of distinguished New York-based installation artist Carol Hamoy.

"I am inspired by personal stories that illuminate social issues, particularly ones that concern women," she writes. For years, Carol Hamoy has collected hundreds of personal stories from women that demonstrate passion and courage in the face of economic, social, and cultural hardship. Hamoy translates these accounts into ethereal, site-specific installations that are both deftly cerebral and delicately visceral.

Story Dresses includes a selection of works from Hamoy's "Welcome to America" series. Initiated in 1994, this project focuses on women émigrés who are relatively unknown outside their circle of family and friends, but whose bravery in the face of adversity deserves memorialization. Hamoy fabricates dresses for each of these women, piecing together threadbare wedding gowns, skirts, and various undergarments, all of which are stained to imitate an antique patina. Gold lettering on each garment spells out the woman's first name, her arrival date in the United States, her place of origin, and a brief statement capturing her essence.

In addition, selections from Hamoy's "Portraits of the Artists as Young Girls" series feature life-sized children's dresses, each with a sepia-toned photograph of a woman artist taken at age five or six printed on both the front and back. A new installation of dresses, "The Invisible Part of the Children of Israel", seeks to identify and personify many of the anonymous women in the Bible; women such as "Lot's wife" are, as Hamoy notes, "given their rightful place in history."

When installed in the gallery space, all three projects float weightlessly, inviting contemplation on the transient nature of human life. The work also metaphorically becomes a celebration of femininity, self-determination, and goodwill, a reminder to the viewer of the importance of community and the bonds of womanhood.

Carol Hamoy's recent exhibitions include the Mitzel Museum in Denver, the Futernick Gallery in Miami, the Skirball Museum in Cincinnati, and the Tenement Museum in New York. Collections holding her work include the National Museum of Women in the Arts and the National Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C., the Wimberley Library in Boca Raton, Florida, and the FrauenMuseum in Bonn, Germany.

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