

DREAM DISSECTED

Works focus on downside of American notion of homeownership

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BY CHRISTOPHER A. YATES

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How often have you heard that to own a home is to live the American dream?

The notion is deeply entrenched in the American psyche. Yet, in the wake of the recent real-estate collapse as well as concerns about climate change, the expectation seemingly doesn't align with economic and environmental realities.

During a Greater Columbus Arts Council residency in Dresden, Germany, artist and curator Melissa Vogley Woods was surprised to discover that many people she met live in large apartment buildings and don't wish to own real estate.

Her conversations with German artist and eventual co-curator Tina Beifuss soon became the basis for a show.

On view in the Hopkins Hall Gallery at Ohio State University, "HouseWarning" features works by 22 artists - 14 from the United States and eight from Germany, where the exhibit will travel in the fall.

The exhibit taps individual perspectives on the idea of home yet is predominantly fixated on loss. Ideas of absence vs. presence and expansion vs. decay are stated repeatedly. Many works examine the boom-bust dichotomy in American culture.

Scott Hocking of Detroit documents blighted neighborhoods and abandoned industrial sites. In a series of 12 photographs titled "The Zone," vast stretches of open land are crisscrossed by empty roads. Soon, viewers realize that the roads define city blocks that once contained the homes - the American dreams - of countless families.

In *Dream Home I*, Ryan Mandell of Bellefonte, Pa., overlaps several photos of newly constructed houses. The result - blurred but readable - calls attention to the fact that such structures are often similar. Documenting the illusion of individual choice, Mandell exposes the home as a product - a corporate manifestation of desire.

Barriers and warning signs are the subjects of Cleveland artist Amy Casey. In the painting *Guarded Premises*, fencing and orange barrels create a strange nest filled with houses. The piece, which is imbued with multiple meanings, suggests protection and prison.

Columbus photographer Fredrik Marsh explores the similar appearance of construction and destruction in *Apartment Building, Demolition Site, Guangzhou, China* and *Apartment Building, Construction Suspended, Outskirts of Guangzhou, China*. Both images feature skeletal masonry walls.

In the drawing *Parzelle 1-34 II*, Maja Linke of Dresden depicts a series on public outdoor furniture. *Parzeller* roughly translates as "parcel of land." The implication is that anywhere you sit can be home.

The artists in the show seem bent on making sense of the human capacity to build, destroy and let go.

In the weighty and thought-provoking exhibition, they trace the poetry of lives lived and those slowly vanishing from view.