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DEANNA THOMPSON / H.C. WESTERMANN

May 19 – July 7, 2012

Opening reception: Saturday, May 19th from 6 to 8pm

Kayne Griffin Corcoran is pleased to present exhibitions by Deanna Thompson and H.C. Westermann. This will be Thompson's second exhibition at the gallery and the first of Westermann's work.

In this exhibition of new work, Deanna Thompson continues her acclaimed series of Homestead paintings. With the isolated remnants of abandoned homes set against the backdrop of the Mojave Desert, Thompson explores the modern tension that exists between society and the environment, and between the temporary and the permanent. Originally born of an idealized concept of self-reliance, the homestead structures in Thompson's paintings are now nothing more than abandoned outposts in a desolate environment. Battered by time and the elements, they have become monuments to change and emblems of the dramatic economic and social shifts that define the present. Yet Thompson also finds a contrary sense of beauty in these dilapidated artifacts. Their primacy in her work acts as a challenge to the romantic orthodoxy of landscape painting. They strip away sentimentality and root her paintings firmly in the now, even as they provide a subtle splendor that hints at the possibilities of this new time.

In his critical essay "Twilight of the Houses," Robert Dean writes that these new paintings "share a common attribute: the depiction of isolated shacks in forsaken landscapes; for the most part, there is no variation in the physical type of these shacks or one-time cabins, only degrees of dilapidation in the sun. In her way, Deanna Thompson, is like an Eskimo cataloguing types of snow while the rest of us only see snow as snow." Deanna Thompson was born in Bakersfield, California and graduated from CSU Bakersfield. She resides in Yucca Valley, California.

The work of H.C. Westermann (1922 – 1981) is celebrated for its innovative use of traditional craft techniques, off-beat humor and poignant personal, literary and artistic references. The sculpture, drawings and prints in the exhibition are representative of those powerful archetypes—the Death Ship, the Figure, the House—which Westermann would explore time and again over the course of his career.

One of the most enduring themes of Westerman's work is the Death Ship: a symbol of humanity's ultimate fate, but also of Westermann's personal experiences of war. His disillusion with the institutionalized brutality of war found expression in works such as 1969's *Death Ship of No Port with a List*; his largest Death Ship sculpture, the solid, unadorned wood boat is paired with a coffin–like case with inlaid text and shark's fins. The Death Ship also appeared in his drawings and prints, broken and adrift at sea. In the early 1970's, Westermann crafted several houses named for and inspired by his neighbors in Connecticut. *The Airline Pilot* (1973) is composed of multiple layers of copper screen, giving the house a solidity at odds with the delicate nature of the material. *Female Figure*, completed in 1977, is one of eight life-sized figures that Westermann created as male / female pairs. The graceful carved saplings that comprise the head and limbs are attached to a boxy vitrine for a torso, encasing a watercolor, two carved wooden books and a photograph of a sailor and his bride. The latest work in the exhibition, *Texas Cactus* (1979-80) displays a painting technique that Westermann developed in the sixties, mixing enamel and water to create a "marbleized" finish. This form was likely inspired by his later trips to Marfa, Texas, where he and his wife vacationed frequently.

Major retrospective exhibitions of Westermann's work have been organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1969); the Whitney Museum of American Art (1978-1979); and, in 2001, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, which traveled to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C.

For additional information, please contact the gallery at 310-586-6886 or e-mail info@kaynegriffincorcoran.com