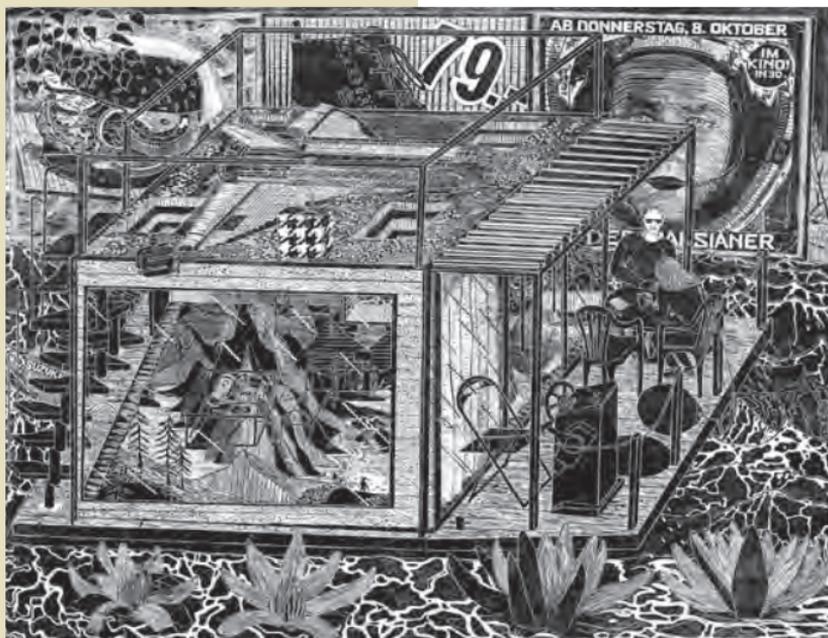


GABRIELA JOLOWICZ

Church Playground

March 24 – April 22, 2017

Opening Reception
Friday, March 24
6:30-8:30 pm



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GABRIELA JOLOWICZ: CHURCH PLAYGROUND

BY IRA SOLOMATINA

Gabriela Jolowicz is a German artist skilled in the ancient art of woodcut. Woodcutting, which has existed since the third century, is a cumbersome and difficult technique, which demands a lot of patience and dedication—the wood doesn't yield easily and once a cut has been made it cannot be undone. There's something noble and grave about the irrevocability of this process and one can only guess how much patience and precision Gabriela employs to create her elaborate, painstakingly detailed woodcuts. As she herself says, a medium-sized woodcut demands up to one month of work.

Gabriela's fascination with this printing technique began while there was no teacher for woodcut at the Leipzig Academy of Art, of which she was a student, and Gabriela decided to master the technique on her own. Though she claims half-jokingly to have made this decision out of sheer laziness ("After all," she says, "I could do whatever I want..."), it was, no doubt, an auspicious one: Gabriela has been creating woodcuts for nearly a decade now.

When asked about how her woodcuts change over time, Gabriela says the newer pieces are more intricate and detailed. Her earlier works—*Mc Curry* (2009), or *iPod* (2010)—present simple, almost minimalist compositions. The main subject is positioned in the centre, the details are few and inconspicuous. Her later woodcuts—the more recent *Houseboat* (2016) or *Disorganiser* (2015) are inhabited by numerous details; they demand some time to take in.

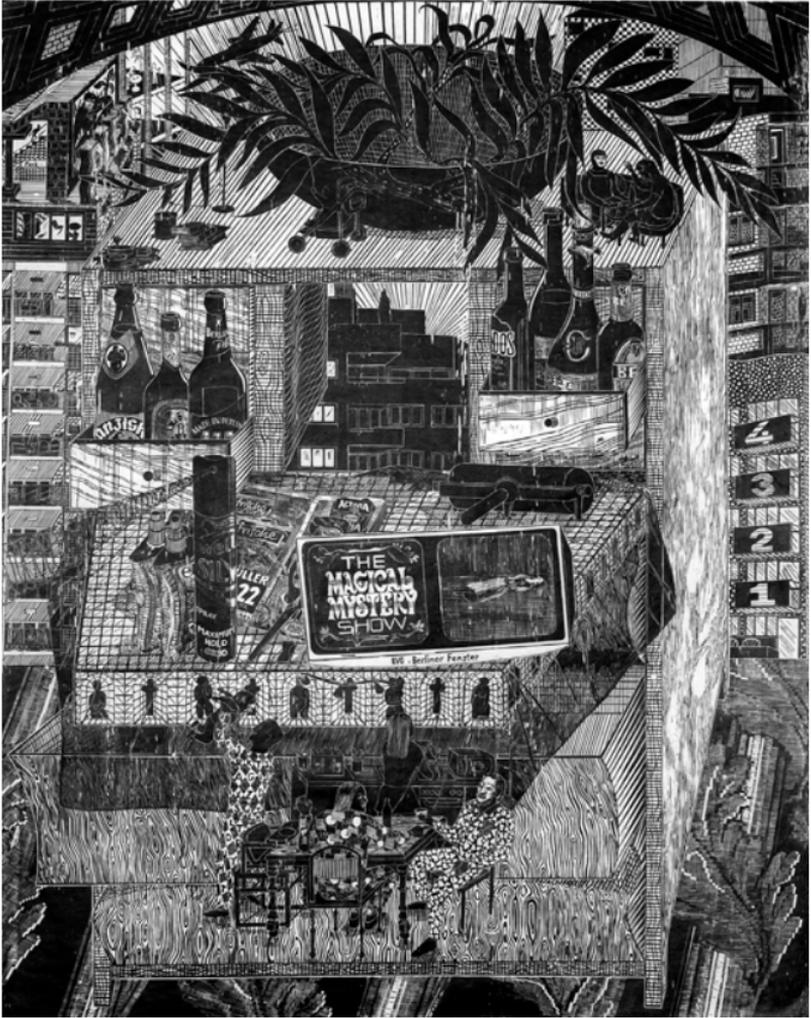
Gabriela's favourite motif is big city life—her woodcuts depict cityscapes abundant with shop windows and road signs or bar-like spaces; inhabited by nonchalant eccentrics, they give a fascinating insight into the bohemian



existence of the café society of the 21st century. Despite the minimalistic colouring—Gabriela only uses black and white for her prints—the works are anything but monotonous: they are absolutely riveting, inviting the viewer to relish the small details, the manifold playful allusions to contemporary life and popular culture. Gabriela's works have a universal appeal—her woodcuts are filled with recognizable references—brand names and shop signs, laptops and iPods, bar rooms and concert venues. In carving these trivial details into the wood, Gabriela elevates them and renders them timeless.

Gabriela sees her woodcuts akin to photographs. She is interested, as she puts it, "in all the things that are happening in the Now." Her documentation of everyday occurrences in woodcuts is comparable to developing film. Though there seems to be no medium more different from the time-consuming process of cutting wood than the instant art of photography, this parallel is well justified. Gabriela Jolowicz has a particular talent of expressing spontaneity in her woodcuts. Should one look at her *System Of A Clown* (2012), *Pivo* (2013), or *Bassy* (2010), one cannot fail to see their photographic quality—the characters are caught in the middle of action, details are drawn with the utmost attention, the scenes are dynamic.

Despite their similarity to photographs, Gabriela's woodcuts are far from scrupulously realistic. Quite on the contrary, they are imaginative and have that specific surreal twist, characteristic of medieval woodcuts. It is not surprising, since the artist cites medieval art and Bible illustrations as her main inspirations (there is even a witty reference to the centuries old print *Scriptorium Monk At Work* in her *Laptop* from 2010). Once one looks into Gabriela's prints, one is stunned by quirky, astonishing



details like, for instance, the monkey at a slot machine in *System Of A Clown*, or the fragile-looking house of cards in *800 Miles From Home*. Gabriela's love for eccentric details comes to its full bloom in *Disorganiser* (2015), a large-scale, many-tiered work that, in full accordance with its title, reveals the chaotic insides of either a hotel or show venue. Here Gabriela creates a delightfully disorderly scene, assembling an array of mismatched details and putting the Lewis Carroll-esque humongous bottles next to a screen borrowed from Berlin's subway.

Gabriela Jolowicz's whole oeuvre is full of captivating incongruities. Her work combines tradition and contemporaneity, spontaneity and calculation. And it is these juxtapositions that make her art so unique.

¹ Jolowicz, Gabriela. Conversation with the author. 19 October 2016. [All Jolowicz quotes from this conversation].

Artist Bio

GABRIELA JOLOWICZ

Gabriela Jolowicz is a woodcut artist from Germany. She completed her diploma and post-graduate studies at the Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig. Her works have been exhibited in Mexico, USA, Canada, Germany, France, England, Italy, Thailand, China, Serbia, Poland and the Netherlands. She won the Holzschnitt Heute international art award 1st Prize in 2012. She was awarded an honourable mention at the 17th German International Exhibition of Graphic Art in Frechen in 2014. In 2016 she won the International Artist in Residence Award of the Black Church Print Studio in Dublin. Gabriela Jolowicz lives in Berlin.

Author Bio

IRA SOLOMATINA

Ira Solomatina is a Berlin-based journalist and researcher, whose interests span visual culture and areal studies. Ira works as a freelance fashion and art observer for Sleek Magazine and GQ Russia and also teaches a course on globalization and culture at the University of Potsdam.

Images

Cover: *Houseboat*, 2016, woodcut, 70 x 90 cm

Interior: *Vik Hill*, 2016, woodcut, 49 x 69 cm

Back: *Disorganiser*, 2015, woodcut, 100 x 78.9 cm

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