

HARDWATER HIGHWAY

ADRIAN WILLIAMS

The Great Transformation, Kunstverein Frankfurt am Main, 2008

The Great Transformation, MARCO, Vigo, 2008



Adrian Williams' work covers a variety of media, spanning from performances to interventions, sound and videos to prose. She created fragments of life stories, invents fictional characters, sews costumes, writes short stories and plays different parts in the performances herself or employs actors. In several ways, fiction, longing and memory play an important role in her works. In the form of stories, pictures and memories Williams gives her audience the possibility of subtly understanding how connected and inseparable the past is from the present and future, and how much desire and imaginations is part of reality. For her stories, she draws on different literary sources and materials or anecdotes and bequeathed narratives. The fiction always has some biographical connotations. Translation, interpretation and differences between languages are themes, which connect her works.

In "Hardwater Highway" (2008), her latest work produced for the exhibition in the Frankfurter Kunstverein she tells a story through messages on an answering machine and images on a wall. For this piece Williams traveled to Bayfield, Wisconsin, USA, where there is an ice-road, which

only exists during the winter months and is the only solid connection crossing Lake Superior between Madeline Island and the mainland. Like the unanswered messages on the answering machine the road represents a one-sided form of communication. Only during the winter months do the inhabitants of the island have the opportunity to independently reach the mainland by car. For the rest of the year they are reliant on the infrequent ferry service. Because of this temporary situation unusual situations arise between island inhabitants and mainlanders which Williams interweaves into a dense network of metaphors.

Another example of her working method can be seen in the installation “Banshee Piano” (2007). Instead of taking a real situation as its starting point, “Banshee Piano” is based on a clearly defined test arrangement: a grand piano—with a built-in contact speaker that converts sounds into vibration—is connected to a sound device. Like a poetic translation machine the instrument with its free-swinging hammers produces sounds created by the vibration on the piano strings. The physical process of transformation can easily be followed; nevertheless, the actual presence of the effect in the room has magical connotations. The title attests to a mystical background: “Banshee” is an expression from Irish folklore and since the 18th century, it has referred to the ghost of a woman whose appearance and wailing song, if heard, signifies the death of a close relative. Without doubt a process of transformation takes place here so that the whisper of the piano strings inevitably turns into a narrative. Without being played the instrument seems to hum to itself.

It is simple occurrences, real phenomenon and experienced or invented incidents to which Adrian Williams draws our attention. By embedding the incidents in a story and a seemingly unexpected context she shows us how miraculous the world around us can be. It is enough—by shifting the focus only marginally from the obvious facts—to take personal, aesthetic or coincidental associations seriously, and already a metaphor develops, describing a new way of reading, understanding and interpreting.

Katja Schröder

20 Northern Wisconsin Memories

The Daily Press, Annual Edition, March 31, 2007



DOWN SHE GOES — On March 2, 1977, a fully-furnished house being towed from the mainland to Madeline Island made national news when it broke through the ice and ended up at the bottom of the lake.

Rocky Barker Photos



Part way there it starts to sink

30 years ago: When the house sank

By **ROCKY BARKER**
For The Daily Press

The story of the house that fell through the ice of Lake Superior

McCarty of Bayfield. "I said no."

The seven-room, fully furnished house only made three of the four miles to Madeline March 2.

The picture of the house sitting crooked in the broken ice ran from Miami to Tel Aviv. The Los Angeles Times ran it on the front page.

Divers worked with Ed Erickson, owner and skipper of the scow Outer Island to lift it to the surface in May. Then the bot-



