

For Immediate Release

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The Transportation of Place:  
Photographs by Andrea Robbins and Max Becher  
at  
The Museum of Contemporary Photography,  
Columbia College Chicago

January 10 through March 5, 2003

CHICAGO, October 2002 -- Since 1984 Andrea Robbins (United States, born 1963) and Max Becher (Germany, born 1964) have collaborated on photographic projects that address cross-cultural influence, or, as they have phrased it: "the transportation of place." In documentary-style color photographs, Robbins and Becher explore the physical manifestations of how one community and its culture impacts another through "overlapping eras of slavery, colonialism, holocausts, immigration, tourism, and mass-communications." The exhibition will feature selections from four series.

In the series *Colonial Remains* (1991), Robbins and Becher photographed the remnants of colonial architectural styles and costumes in Lüderitz, Namibia. This small town was built in the last decade of German rule when the country was called German South-West Africa. Only in 1990 did Namibia achieve independence and German settlers and German influence have continued to persist, in part as a consequence of the apartheid system. Today Lüderitz is a popular tourist attraction.

In the United States, Robbins and Becher have photographed the ways in which our cultural heritage is commercially managed. Their series *Bavarian by Law* depicts the "Bavarianization" of Leavenworth, Washington. In the 1960s citizens of this logging town in the Cascade Mountains determined to legislate themselves out of a period of economic decline by mandating a Bavarian architectural style in order to attract tourists.

Influence works both ways, and in the series *German Indians* (1997 – 98), Robbins and Becher documented the annual celebration in Radebeul, near Dresden, of the German nineteenth-century writer of American Western novels, Karl May. For this celebration, German fans gather into tribes, camp in tepees, and dress in Native American costumes. According to Robbins and Becher, May's "pro-Indian" stories can "be understood as a progressive, anti-colonial message" that is also "anti-American/anti-capitalist." Still popular today, May was admired in both East and West Germany following World War II.

The series *The Americans of Samaná* (1998 – 2001) documents the descendants of freed African American slaves who traveled to the Dominican Republic in 1824 in a scheme initiated and financed by President Pierre Boyer of Haiti, with the cooperation of the American Colonization Society. Today about 8,000 descendants of the original group speak an American English from 1824 in a Spanish-speaking country and live in linguistic and religious isolation--the "Americanos" are protestant, while most other Dominicans are Catholic.

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The opening reception takes place on January 10, 2003 from 5 until 7 pm at The Museum of Contemporary Photography and is free and open to the public. The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of The Museum of Contemporary Photography are sponsored in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Kaplan Family Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/Gallery 37; and American Airlines, the official airlines of The Museum of Contemporary Photography. "The Transportation of Place: Photographs by Andrea Robbins and Max Becher" has been organized in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut of Chicago, German Cultural Center.

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The museum is free and open to the public weekdays from 10 am until 5 pm (Thursdays until 8 pm) and Saturdays from 12 until 5 pm. It is located at 600 S. Michigan Avenue at Harrison Street. Phone 312-663-5554 or visit [mocp.org](http://mocp.org) for additional information.