

Press Release

Barbara Chase-Riboud. The Three Josephines

7 November – 23 December 2023

Hauser & Wirth, Wooster Street



New York...Hauser & Wirth is honored to inaugurate its new space on Wooster Street in New York City's historic Soho Cast Iron District with 'The Three Josephines,' an exhibition of exceptional new and recent works by celebrated Paris-based American artist, novelist and poet Barbara Chase-Riboud (b. 1939, Philadelphia). Internationally admired as one of the most visionary and innovative creators of her generation, Chase-Riboud will present sculptures and works on paper in her first exhibition with Hauser & Wirth since her representation by the gallery was announced earlier this year.

'The Three Josephines' follows two landmark museums exhibitions: 'Barbara Chase-Riboud: Infinite Folds' at Serpentine North, London, and 'The Encounter: Barbara Chase-Riboud/Alberto Giacometti' at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. Chase-Riboud's first UK solo exhibition, the Serpentine presentation (11 October 2022 through 10 April 2023) charted over seven decades of the artist's innovative practice and featured works that will be included in Hauser & Wirth's forthcoming show. On view from 5 May through 9 October 2023, the MoMA exhibition paired the work of two pioneering artists whose breakthroughs expanded the language of modern sculpture. Additionally, Hauser & Wirth staged a solo presentation of works by Chase-Riboud in its stand at Frieze London this October.

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About the exhibition

At the center of 'The Three Josephines' are three bronze sculptures that pay tribute to the legendary performer, civil rights activist and World War II secret agent Josephine Baker (1905–1975), only the fifth woman in history—and the first Black woman ever—to be inducted into the French Panthéon, the national tomb of heroes. Monumental in impact, balancing power and seduction, these sculptures are the latest works from Chase-Riboud's ongoing 'La Musica' series, which explores music, movement and stillness through bold juxtapositions of materials and forms. Rising two meters tall, each of the three patinated bronze sculptures stands upon its own stage-like platform and combines hard folds of metal with sumptuous textiles. With thick coils of silk spilling down to the floor from their apices, these decidedly abstract sculptures nevertheless conjure inevitable associations with the famously sinuous limbs of their namesake—meditations upon sensuality, creativity and the effects of living in a spotlight.

Surrounding these earthly deities, Chase-Riboud presents a special selection of delicate all-white works on paper. Achieved through a technique the artist has developed and perfected over the past five decades, these amalgams of sculptural relief and drawing are made by piercing silk thread through Arches paper. Evoking both the cursive lines of handwriting and figurative structure of hieroglyphics, they are formally and conceptually linked to Chase-Riboud's automatic writings and poems. Each of the fourteen works carries a narrative title such as 'If what was written no longer remains' and 'My last word to you is folded lengthwise and knotted.' An award-winning poet and novelist, as well as a renowned visual artist, Chase-Riboud weaves her inspirations, ideas and technical prowess from one medium to the other, viewing them all as inseparable. Poetry, she once said, is 'very close to a discipline both familiar and dear to me: drawing. Both are dangerous searches for perfection...drawings prepared me for the demands of poetry.'

About the artist

Born in Philadelphia PA in 1939, Chase-Riboud currently resides between Paris and Rome. Chase-Riboud's sculpture and drawings are in museum collections around the world. She holds the distinction of being the youngest artist to enter the collections of MoMA, which first acquired her work in 1955 when Chase-Riboud was 15 years old. Her work resides in the permanent collections of many major institutions, including the Tate Modern, London SF MoMA, Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond, VA Menil Drawing Institute, Houston TX , Guggenheim, New York, Glenstone Museum, Potomac, MD Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington D.C.; General Services Administration, New York NY; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York NY; Museum of Modern Art, New York NY; National Collections of France; Newark Museum, Newark NJ; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans LA; New-York Historical Society Museum, New York NY; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia PA; Smithsonian African American Museum, Washington D.C.; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York NY; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven CT; and Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore MD.

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Parallel to her visual art and sculptural practice, Chase-Riboud is lauded as a poet and writer of historical fiction. Her literary oeuvre includes nearly a dozen prize-winning novels and collections of poetry, to which she recently added her memoir 'I Always Knew,' published in 2022 by Princeton University Press. This genre-breaking book is based upon the letters Chase-Riboud sent to her mother over a 30-year period. As part of the artist's gallery representation, Hauser & Wirth Publishers will collaborate with Chase-Riboud on her literary projects. Chase-Riboud is the recipient of numerous awards and honorary degrees, including the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government in 1996 and the Grand Prix Artistique from the Simone and Cino Del Duca Foundation in 2021. In 2022, she was awarded the Légion d'honneur, France's highest order of merit.

About Wooster Street

Hauser & Wirth's new Soho site will expand the gallery's Manhattan footprint to span three neighborhoods—the Upper East Side, West Chelsea and Soho—and continue its longstanding practice of embracing the architectural heritage of the communities where it works. Constructed in 1920 as a truck garage, the distinctive single-story building at 134 Wooster Street occupies its own place within Soho's larger role in the story of contemporary art. In the early 1970s, celebrated German abstractionist Blinky Palermo moved into 141 Wooster Street, home to Heiner Friedrich's eponymous New York gallery where, in 1974, Friedrich co-founded the Dia Art Foundation. In 1975, Palermo painted a veritable portrait of 134 Wooster: 'Wooster Street' captures the structure's deep green façade emblazoned in white with 'JARR FUEL,' the name of its occupant at that time. In 1977, the year of Palermo's death, Friedrich installed Walter de Maria's defining 'New York Earth Room,' a renowned interior work of land art that remains in the space to this day, steps from the front door of 134 Wooster.

In 1991, the building became the downtown location of Gagosian, an essential addition to a neighborhood newly teeming with galleries whose presence endowed Soho with what The New York Times described as 'a giddy, precarious sense of excitement.' After presenting dozens of exhibitions in the converted garage, that gallery departed for West Chelsea in 1999. The building subsequently housed a succession of design-oriented retail concerns over the ensuing two decades. When Hauser & Wirth officially opens its doors in November, the former garage at 134 Wooster will once again be a home for art and artists.

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Caption and courtesy information:

Barbara Chase-Riboud

Josephine Red/Black

2021

Black patina bronze with red cord

59 x 51.18 x 74.8 in, 150 x 130 x 190 cm

© Barbara Chase-Riboud

Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Jo Underhill

Barbara Chase-Riboud, pictured with 'Mao's Organ' (2007 and 'Malcolm X #13' (2008).

Courtesy of Pulitzer Arts Foundation

Rendering of Wooster Street Facade

Courtesy of David Bench / inca architecture pllc