



October 2005

Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson
On View February 24 through August 14, 2006, at the Brooklyn Museum

Media Preview Thursday, February 23, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson, on view at the Brooklyn Museum February 24 through August 14, 2006, will present nearly 100 works by the celebrated African-American artist. Robinson's mixed-media pieces draw on cultural identity, travel to ancestral homelands, and memories of the Poindexter Village neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio, where she was born.

In addition to traditional paintings, sketches, and sculpture made with paint, ink, charcoal, and clay, Robinson's major works are composed of found objects such as fabric, buttons, pieces of leather, stones, leaves, bark, twigs, and a special medium she calls "hogmawg," made mainly from mud, grease, dyes, and glue.

Through drawings, paintings, sculpture, puppetry, music boxes, and complex constructions she calls RagGonNons, Robinson reflects on themes of family and ancestry, and on the grandeur of simple objects and everyday tasks. Similar to quilts, but with different materials, RagGonNons can take years to research and create and continue to evolve in response to others' experiences of them.

Robinson was aware of her artistic talent at a very early age and was encouraged by her family. She began drawing at the age of three, and her father gave her pieces of wood on which to paint. He also taught her how to gain inspiration from her environment and how to make hogmawg.

The city of Columbus and her neighborhood of Poindexter Village, a federally funded metropolitan housing development on the east side, remain a constant source of Robinson's artistic imagination. At eight years old, she first exhibited her work on a makeshift clothesline on the corner of Champion and Mt. Vernon Avenues, to attract the attention of people attending a nearby religious revival.

In 1955, at the age of 15, Robinson began attending Saturday classes at the Columbus Art School (now the Columbus College of Art and Design). She enrolled full time two years later after graduating from high school. In 1959, she won first prize in an illustration contest sponsored by *Seventeen* magazine.

Brooklyn Museum

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In 1968, while working as a senior illustrator for North American Rockwell Corporation, Robinson was introduced to woodcarver Elijah Pierce, with whom she developed an ongoing relationship and mentorship. In 1979, a group of her Columbus friends raise money to send Robinson to Africa, where, an Egyptian holy man gave her the African name "Aminah" and she legally changed her name to Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson. The next year a solo exhibition of her work *Afrikan Pilgrimage: The Extended Family*, was presented at the Kojo Photo Art Studio in Columbus.

In 1983, Robinson participated in her first group exhibition, at the Carl Solway Gallery in Cincinnati. Later that year she began *The Poindexter Village* series and the Sapelo series. The latter is based on her trip to her father's ancestral home, *Sapelo* Island, Georgia.

Robinson's work has been presented at a number of museums and galleries including the Akron Art Museum, Ohio; the Cleveland State University Art Gallery; The Drawing Center, New York; the Oakland Museum; the Baltimore Museum of Art; and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Robinson was recently awarded a MacArthur Foundation Fellows Grant of \$500,000, which is awarded to "talented individuals who have shown extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits."

Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson was organized by the Columbus Museum of Art (where it was on view December 12, 2002, through April 20, 2003) in partnership with Arts Midwest and the Ohio Arts Council. Charlotta Kotik, Curator and Chair, Department of Contemporary Art, is coordinating the Brooklyn Museum's presentation. The exhibition will move to the Toledo Museum of Art in 2007.

A full-color catalogue, published by the Columbus Museum of Art in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, will accompany the exhibition.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission:

Contribution \$8; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$4. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits must be arranged in advance by calling extension 234.

Directions:

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop; Lexington Avenue express (4 or 5) to Nevins Street, cross platform and transfer to the 2 or 3. Bus: B71, B41, B69, B48. On-site parking available.

Museum Hours:

Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; First Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; all other Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.