

Nevada Museum of Art

PENELOPE GOTTLIEB *NO \$ DOWN*

January 3-May 23, 2010



For nearly a decade, Penelope Gottlieb has worked to produce a Series of drawings that examine the archetypal American Dream of home ownership, while also exploring the idea of the house as a status symbol, marker of class identity, and focal point of desire. In *NO \$ DOWN*, Gottlieb's colored-pencil drawings catalogue frontal views of popular domestic architecture. From storybook homes and tract houses to traditional bungalows and numerous other architectural styles, Gottlieb offers an artistic response to the complex and evolving narrative of real estate in America.

To create her drawings, Gottlieb scours newspaper ads and real estate magazines, seizing on small photographs of houses which become the inspiration for her finely-detailed, monochromatic renderings. Some of the drawings are based on advertisements published in Reno-area newspapers that Gottlieb collected during a recent trip to northern Nevada. Once Gottlieb completes a work, she matches it with a vintage "fixer upper" frame, which she then elaborately "refurbishes" and paints to match the correlating drawing. This process wryly mimics the act of "flipping" houses that was common during the real estate boom of the last decade.

Gottlieb's installation *NO \$ DOWN* also includes a selection of white-washed furniture based on interiors from popular television sitcoms such as *Leave It To Beaver*, *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *The Jeffersons*. These television programs implicitly linked class status with home ownership and Gottlieb's inclusion of these items draws attention to that complex phenomenon. Contemporary perceptions of home ownership, Gottlieb acknowledges, have changed dramatically over the past year due to America's economic downturn. On a final wall of the gallery, Gottlieb hangs a grid of souvenir glass plates, their multiplicity representing the mass production of single-family homes and their continued commodification. The delicate plates also encourage viewers to reflect on the American Dream of home ownership—a dream that has recently proven to be more fragile than ever.

Ann M. Wolfe Curator of Exhibitions and Collections