

ROEBLING HALL

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Rosenthal admitted that he will now have to choose his exhibition pictures quite carefully, given the charged racial climate in New York. "I can't just go for my best picture," he explained. "It can't have any element of racism or xenophobia."

At Brooklyn's Roebling Hall gallery, Swiss artist Christoph Draeger, a self-proclaimed catastrophe specialist, is displaying his latest piece - an incinerated trailer. Since 1993, Draeger has been visiting disaster scenes - Mount St. Helens and Lockerbie, Scotland, among them - and creating installations that play on media portrayals of those destroyed landmarks. The artist's giant pictures of exploding aircraft, cut into jigsaw puzzles, are in Mass MoCA's current exhibition "Game Show."

"My work is about memory, like when a village or a site becomes the center of media attention," Draeger explained over the phone last week from Holland, where he was creating an installation consisting of a tornado-stricken house whose TV sets constantly blare MSNBC. "A village or a site becomes the center of media attention and synonymous with disaster. That's valid for a while, and then people forget. There's always a healing process."

"I'm glad this piece isn't showing in New York right now," he admitted of the blasted house, which appeared last winter at Manhattan's LiebmanMagnan Gallery. "I don't mean to offend people. My work can be provocative, but this is not the time to provoke."

Draeger watched the towers fall from his Williamsburg studio. "People were calling me and saying, 'Are you going to do something on this?'" he said. "But it was the best-documented disaster ever, so there's no need for me to go down there and take my pictures."

While some artists are thinking of leaving New York, Draeger plans to stay. "I don't feel like this should force me out of the city. But there's always a second thought - wouldn't it be wise to go back to Switzerland? No, because if everyone left, that would be horrible."