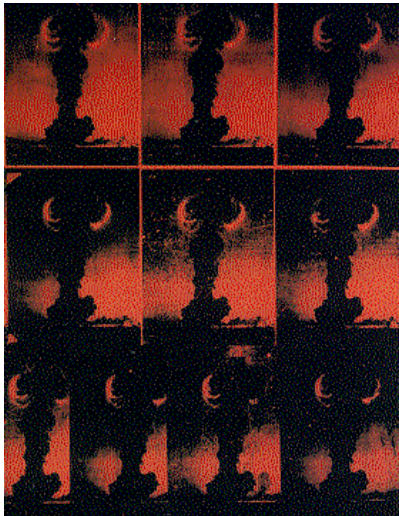


The Body of a House: Paintings by Robert Beckmann

As a young boy growing up during the Cold War era, Las Vegas-based artist Robert Beckmann remembers watching film footage documenting the 1953 detonation of a 16-kiloton nuclear bomb nicknamed “Annie” at the Nevada Test Site (now the Nevada National Security Site). Aiming to better understand the potential impact of a nuclear weapon, the U.S. government had constructed several single-family houses—outfitted with furniture, automobiles, and human mannequins—just 7,500 feet from ground zero.

Beckmann painted this series of large-scale, iodine-hued paintings titled *The Body of a House* in 1993. His imagery is based on still frames taken from the documentary film he saw as a child; the eight panels represent sequential scenes unfolding over 2.33 seconds of real time. Each view focuses on a different stage of destruction, which Beckmann dramatized through his use of fiery orange and red coloring.



Andy Warhol, *Atomic Bombs* (detail), 1965

Beckmann joins a long line of artists who have depicted real and imagined nuclear destruction. Most notably, *The Body of a House* recalls the serialized imagery of American Pop artist Andy Warhol's silk-screened print *Atomic Bomb* (1965), which featured a mushroom cloud against a deep red background. The darkened skies and mysterious eerie glow in Beckmann's paintings are a frightening reminder of the devastating impacts of nuclear war.