

NEWS THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

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Press Preview: Tuesday, June 8, 2004 at 10 am

Sally Mann: What Remains

at the Corcoran Gallery of Art
June 12 – September 6, 2004

Washington, DC – Drawing upon her personal experiences as inspiration, Sally Mann creates a haunting series of photographs that speaks about the one subject that affects us all, the loss of life. Dark, beautiful and revelatory, *What Remains*, a five-part meditation on mortality, explores the ineffable divide between body and soul, life and death, spirit and earth. Never one to shy away from challenging subject matter, Mann asks us to contemplate the beauty and efficiency with which nature assimilates the body once life has ended. Accompanied by a book published by Bulfinch Press, *Sally Mann: What Remains* is on view at the Corcoran Gallery of Art from June 12 through September 6, 2004.



Sally Mann, *Untitled*, 2000, from the series *December 8th*, gelatin silver print with copper toning, lent by the artist, courtesy of Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York. Copyright © 2003 by Sally Mann

“Death is powerful,” says Mann. “It’s perhaps best approached as a springboard to appreciate life more fully. That’s why this show ends with pictures of living people, pictures of my children. This whole body of work is a process of thanksgiving.”

Organized in five sections, *Sally Mann: What Remains* features more than 150 photographs. *Matter Lent* depicts the decomposition of Mann’s beloved pet greyhound, Eva. Here, she uses the wet-collodion process, a practice in nineteenth-century photography, to create images that are simultaneously painterly, illusionistic, weathered and photographic. *Untitled*, perhaps the most visually shocking section in the exhibition, is made up of images of human bodies going through the natural

process of decomposition at a forensic study site. In this series, Mann does not shield the viewer from the reality of bodily decay. “There’s a moment where you look at those bodies and say, ‘that was a human being.’ That was someone who was loved, cherished, caressed,” says Mann. “That’s a very tough one for me, the whole question of when a human becomes remains. That question came up over and over again while I was doing this work.”

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The middle section of this exhibition features two series of landscape images: *December 8, 2000* focuses on the site where an armed fugitive committed suicide on Mann's bucolic property in Virginia's rural Shenandoah Valley. She witnessed life meeting death at her doorstep and this transitional incident served as the raw inspiration from which her photographic project unfolded. The *Antietam* series of landscape photographs, made at the Antietam battlefield in Sharpsburg, Maryland, go far beyond simple documentation of this rural Civil War location where 23,000 men were killed, wounded or declared missing on a single day in September 1862. These large scale images invite the viewer to contemplate the role of photography in documenting history, time passing and death's sanctification of the eternal soil. Mann concludes the project with *What Remains*, thirty-six extreme close-up portraits of her three children's faces seen floating in an inky black atmosphere. While the subjects of these loving photographs appear in stark contrast to the ghostly images of death in her other series, the viewer cannot help but recall the other images when looking into the faces of the children. In this context, her children are "what remains."



Sally Mann, *Untitled #2*, 2000, from the series *What Remains*, ambrotype, lent by the artist, courtesy of Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York. Copyright © 2003 by Sally Mann

"This project is an epic visual poem – a philosophical rumination on mortality, one subject that no one can really explain. What happens to life when it ends? What remains that we do not see? Who could better explore this essentially unknowable topic than an artist with Sally Mann's questioning gaze," comments Philip Brookman, Corcoran Senior Curator of Photography and Media Arts and curator of the exhibition. "For Sally, such an examination of the moment when the present becomes past should be accomplished by using photographic processes of another era as well."

WET-COLODION PROCESS

Introduced in 1851, the wet-collodion process is a method of making photographic negatives using a glass plate coated with chemicals. The plate is sensitized in a silver nitrate solution and exposed to light while still wet and sticky, which gives the photographer about 5 minutes to make the exposure.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sally Mann was born in Lexington, Virginia, in 1951. She received a BA from Hollins College in 1974 and an MA in writing from the same school in 1975. Mann has won numerous awards, including three National Endowment for the Arts fellowships and a Guggenheim fellowship. Her photographs have been exhibited internationally and are in the permanent collections of major museums worldwide, including the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Mann's photographs have been featured in several Corcoran exhibitions: *In Response to Place: Photographs from The Nature Conservancy's Last Great Places* (2001), *Hospice: A Photographic Inquiry* (1996) and *Sally Mann: The Lewis Law Portfolio* (1977), Mann's first one-person exhibition. Her past publications include *Second Sight*, *At Twelve*, *Immediate Family* and *Still Time*. A documentary film about Mann's family pictures was nominated for an Academy Award in 1993. A feature-length follow-up spanning her career

is in development and will air on HBO and the BBC. *Time* magazine named Mann as America's best photographer in 2001. She lives in Virginia with her family and seven rescued greyhounds.

CATALOGUE

Bulfinch Press has published a 132 page book with 85 tritone photographs and one four-color photograph that accompanies the exhibition *Sally Mann: What Remains*. For additional information, contact Bulfinch Press at (212) 522-6635 or visit www.bulfinchpress.com. To purchase the hardcover catalogue (\$50), call the Corcoran Shop at (202) 639-1790.

PRESS PREVIEW

A press preview of the exhibition is scheduled for Tuesday, June 8, 2004, from 10 am to noon. For more information, or to RSVP, please call the Corcoran's Public Affairs Office at (202) 639-1703 or email PR@corcoran.org.

PRESS IMAGES

High resolution digital images are available to press via the Corcoran's FTP site (www.corcoran.org/press). To obtain login information and a password, please contact the Corcoran Public Affairs Office at PR@corcoran.org or (202) 639-1703.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SPONSORSHIP

Sally Mann: What Remains is organized by the Corcoran Gallery of Art and made possible with the generous support of Deane and Paul Shatz, Carolyn Alper, CHROME INC., and the Sondra and Charles Gilman Foundation.

EXHIBITION ITINERARY

Following the presentation at the Corcoran, *Sally Mann: What Remains* will begin a national tour.

ABOUT THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

A privately funded institution, the Corcoran Gallery of Art was founded in 1869 as Washington's first museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as European painting, sculpture, photography and decorative arts. Founded in 1890, Corcoran College of Art + Design is Washington's only 4-year college of art and design offering BFA degrees in Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Digital Media Design, Photojournalism and Photography-and AFA degrees in Fine Arts, Interior Design and Photography. The College's Continuing Education Program, which offers part-time credit and non-credit classes for children and adults, draws more than 3,500 participants each year.

The Corcoran Gallery of Art is located at New York Avenue and 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC, and is open every day, except Tuesday, 10 am - 5 pm and until 9 pm on Thursday. The Corcoran is closed every Tuesday. Admission to the Corcoran is: \$6.75 for adults; \$4.75 for senior citizens; \$3 for students with current ID; and \$12 for families. Free for Members and children under 12. Admission is "pay as you wish" on Monday all day and on Thursday after 5 pm. The public information line for the museum is (202) 639-1700. The information line for the college is (202) 639-1800. The Corcoran Web site address is www.corcoran.org.

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