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CORCORAN PRESENTS TARYN SIMON: A LIVING MAN DECLARED DEAD AND OTHER CHAPTERS I–XVIII

Corcoran the only East Coast venue to show full photographic project
November 10, 2012–February 24, 2013



WASHINGTON, D.C. – This fall, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design presents the first complete East Coast exhibition of *Taryn Simon: A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII*, a photographic project by the artist Taryn Simon (American, b. 1975). Simon produced the work over a four-year period (2008–11), during which she traveled around the world researching and recording the living ascendants and descendants of a single individual, or “bloodlines,” and their related stories. “In each of the 18 chapters,” the artist has explained, “you see the external forces of territory, governance, power, and religion, colliding with the internal forces of psychological and physical inheritance.” The subjects Simon documents include feuding families in Brazil, victims of genocide in Bosnia, the body double of Saddam Hussein’s son Uday, and the so-called living dead in India. The exhibition is organized by Philip Brookman, chief curator and head of research at the Corcoran.

A Living Man Declared Dead is divided into 18 chapters, with each chapter comprised of three segments. The first segment is a portrait series systematically presented in grids depicting individuals directly related by blood, including the living ascendants and descendants of a single individual. In some cases, Simon shows empty portraits, representing those who could not be photographed. The portraits are followed by a text panel, in which the artist constructs narratives

and recalls details about the bloodline and related story. Here she also notes the reasons for the absences in the portrait panel, which include imprisonment, dengue fever, and women not granted permission to be photographed. The last segment is Simon's "footnote" panel, comprising images that serve as photographic evidence of the narrative.

Simon's detailed archive of images and text is methodically organized to reveal social changes driven by science, culture, and chance. This collection is at once cohesive and arbitrary, mapping the relationships among order, chaos, genetics, and other components of fate. In contrast to the sequential ordering of bloodlines, the central themes of the stories—violence, resilience, corruption, and survival—counter the highly structured appearance of the work. *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII* highlights the space between text and image, absence and presence, and order and anarchy.

"Taryn's work represents a new kind of documentary photography," says Brookman. "By creating this conceptual framework—an archive, both scientific and chaotic in its order—she is developing new methods with which to talk about ideas in contemporary culture. She is seeking to peel back the layers of myth and colonial thinking that form the foundation of how we understand different cultures. Her innovative style, coupled with the Corcoran's longstanding interest in all forms of photography, makes this project incredibly compelling to our program."

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Taryn Simon was born in New York in 1975. *A Living Man Declared Dead* builds upon the themes and techniques of her previous work. *Contraband* (2010) is an archive of global desires and perceived threats, presenting 1,075 images of items that were detained or seized from passengers and mail entering the United States from abroad. *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* (2007) reveals objects, sites, and spaces that are integral to America's foundation, mythology, or daily functioning but remain inaccessible or unknown to a public audience. These unseen subjects range from radioactive capsules at a nuclear waste storage facility to a black bear in hibernation to the art collection of the CIA. *The Innocents* (2003) documents cases of wrongful conviction in the U.S., calling into question photography's function as a credible witness and arbiter of justice.

Simon's photographs and writing have been the subject of monographic exhibitions at institutions including The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012), Tate Modern, London (2011); Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2011); Milwaukee Art Museum (2011), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007); Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2008); Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2004); and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2003). Her work is in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tate Modern, Whitney Museum, Centre Pompidou, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, and more. In 2011 her work was presented at the Danish Pavilion in the 54th Venice Biennale.

PRESS PREVIEW

Media are invited to a press preview for *Taryn Simon: A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII* on November 8 at 10 a.m. at the Corcoran, 500 Seventeenth St. NW, Washington, D.C. RSVP to pr@corcoran.org by November 5.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A full-color, hardcover catalogue, *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII*, features essays by cultural historians Homi Bhabha and Geoffrey Batchen. Designed by Taryn Simon and Joseph Logan; Published by Gagosian Gallery, WCP, and Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; distributed by Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., in association with Gagosian Gallery. Weight: 10 lbs. 3 oz. ISBN: 978-0-8478-4018-2. 864 pages. \$125.

ARNOLD NEWMAN DISTINGUISHED VISITING LECTURE IN PHOTOGRAPHY: TARYN SIMON

Thursday, November 8; 7 p.m.

Free; Pre-registration required at https://getinvolved.corcoran.org/newman_lecture

Frances and Armand Hammer Auditorium, Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design

The Arnold Newman Distinguished Visiting Lecture in Photography is generously funded by the Arnold and Augusta Newman Foundation in memory of Arnold Newman, who had a long-standing relationship with the Corcoran and curator Philip Brookman.

RELATED EXHIBITION

Transparency

November 21, 2012–November 30, 2012

GALLERY31 at the Corcoran

Students from the Corcoran College of Art + Design respond to the documentary photography of Taryn Simon, whose work will be on view in the Gallery. Inspired by the artist's rigorous research methods and the questions she asks about contemporary social issues, students will have direct interaction with Simon in workshops as they prepare work for the exhibition.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission to *Taryn Simon: A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII* is \$10 for adults, and \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID). Children 12 and under, active duty military (with ID) and Corcoran Members enter for free.

MEMBERSHIP

Corcoran Gallery of Art membership offers special access to the Corcoran's renowned collection, temporary exhibitions, lectures, films, concerts and an array of social events. Members also receive valuable discounts at the Corcoran Shop, Todd Gray's Muse at the Corcoran, and the Corcoran College of Art + Design. Corcoran Members may visit *Taryn Simon: A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII* an unlimited number of times for free. For more information, contact the Membership office at (202) 639-1753, membership@corcoran.org or online at www.corcoran.org/membership.

ABOUT THE CORCORAN

Established in 1869, the **Corcoran Gallery of Art** was one of America's first museums of art—dedicated, in the words of founder William Wilson Corcoran, to “encouraging American genius.” Today it is Washington, D.C.'s largest nonfederal art museum, known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. A dynamic schedule of special exhibitions complements a range of educational programming, which together enrich the perspectives of the visiting public, support the local arts community, and encourage thoughtful interpretation of today's most compelling social issues. **The Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded as a school of art in 1890 and stands as Washington's only

four-year accredited college of art and design. The College is one of the few in the nation whose educational model includes an integral relationship with a museum, fostering the talent of the next generation of artists. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit www.corcoran.org.



Hours

Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Thursday: 10 a.m.–9 p.m.

The Corcoran is closed on Monday and Tuesday.

The Museum offers extended hours every Thursday until 9 p.m.

Admission

Wednesday through Friday and Sunday: \$10 Adults; \$8 full-time students (with ID) and seniors (62+); children under 12 free; Corcoran Members free.

Image:

Page one: Excerpt from Chapter XVII, *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII*. Wilson Centre for Photography. © 2012 Taryn Simon.

(Name withheld), 16 Mar. 1993. Student. Undisclosed location, Ukraine.

(Name withheld), 25 Nov. 1993. Student. Undisclosed location, Ukraine.

(Name withheld), 17 Jan. 1994. Student. Undisclosed location, Ukraine.

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