

# CORCORAN

GALLERY OF ART • COLLEGE of ART+DESIGN

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**CORCORAN PRESENTS *ELLEN HARVEY: THE ALIEN'S GUIDE TO THE RUINS OF WASHINGTON, D.C.***  
*Latest NOW at the Corcoran exhibition on view July 3—October 6, 2013*

WASHINGTON, D.C.— This summer, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design presents *Ellen Harvey: The Alien's Guide to the Ruins of Washington, D.C.* The new, site-specific project is the latest in the *NOW at the Corcoran* series, the Gallery's contemporary art program dedicated to showcasing the work of emerging and mid-career artists.

*The Alien's Guide to the Ruins of Washington, D.C.* is a glimpse into the world of the distant future. Human civilization having long since come to an end, the earth is

populated now only by ruins, ripe for archeological interpretation by visitors from another planet. Most immediately striking to these extraterrestrial observers are the remains of classical and neo-classical buildings that seem to have taken root in every corner of the globe. Attempting to make sense of what they find, Harvey's aliens immediately mine the potential of one of the greatest examples of neo-classical cities—Washington, D.C.—as a tourist destination.

*The Alien's Guide to the Ruins of Washington, D.C.* is the result. A tour of America's capital city through alien eyes, the exhibition's centerpiece is a self-guided map of Washington's landmarks. Available for pick-up at the Corcoran's "alien visitor center" (located in the Corcoran's Atrium) as well as other locations throughout the city, *The Alien's Guide* contains reconstructions and interpretations of such sites as the White House, the World War II Memorial, and the U.S. Capitol.

As Harvey explains: "Neoclassical architecture is far and away the most successful and widely adopted architectural style. For over 2,000 years, civilization after civilization has succumbed to its infectious charms. Why would extraterrestrials be immune?"



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The rest of the exhibition documents the aliens' efforts to make sense of the remains of the civilization around them. *The Pillar-Builder Archive* is a vast trove of postcards that documents humanity's love affair with the style, following its roots as a symbol of democracy in ancient Greece to its subsequent use in the service of empire builders, fascists, Stalinists, museums, banks, and post offices. Seduced by the architecture's power themselves, the aliens have erected a neo-classical rocket ship, "the latest in Pillar-Builder Space Travel," on view in the Corcoran's Rotunda.

"Ellen's project explores what the world looks like and how it got that way," says Sarah Newman, curator of contemporary art at the Corcoran. "Classicism was the original viral aesthetic—worming its way throughout history and taking on the attributes of the cultures that appropriated it. *The Alien's Guide* is both playful and serious: a look into our cultural infatuations and to how meaning is created."

*The Alien's Guide to the Ruins of Washington, D.C.* is an investigation into the abiding influence of classicism, the dissemination of style, and the language of power. Humorous, unexpected, and eye-opening, it sheds light on a world at once familiar and strange.

Visitors—alien and otherwise—have the opportunity to visit the exhibition for free on Saturdays between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend as part of the Corcoran's Free Summer Saturdays promotion. For information about the exhibition, visit <http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/aliensguide>. On Twitter, follow #AliensInDC.

*NOW at the Corcoran* is funded in part by Altria Group and the Corcoran Gallery of Art's 1869 Society.

#### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Ellen Harvey was born in the United Kingdom and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She is a graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program and holds degrees from Harvard University and Yale Law School. Harvey has exhibited extensively in the U.S. and abroad and was included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial and, more recently, in *Revealed*, the inaugural exhibition of the Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2011) and the *Museum Show* at the Arnolfini, Bristol, UK (2011). She has an upcoming solo exhibition at the Groenige Museum, Brussels in 2014. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Nudist Museum* at the Bass Museum, Miami (2010); *Beautiful Ruin* at the Center for Contemporary Art, Warsaw (2009); and *Mirror* at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (2006). Well-known projects include *New York Beautification Project* (1999-2001) for which she illegally "tagged" New York City streets with small, Hudson River-style landscape paintings, and *A Whitney for the Whitney* (2003), for which she laboriously repainted every work in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, creating a purposefully inadequate stand-in for the museum.

## ABOUT NOW AT THE CORCORAN

*NOW at the Corcoran* is a series of exhibitions and performances that presents new and site-specific work by emerging and mid-career artists. It highlights work that addresses issues central to the local, national, and global communities of Washington, D.C., and that responds to the collections, history, and architecture of the museum. *NOW* programming has a dynamic and integrated relationship with the Corcoran College of Art + Design. As the only visual arts college in Washington, D.C., the Corcoran's active base of practicing art students and faculty makes it a natural center for making, displaying, and thinking about contemporary art. Visiting artists participate in guest lectures, workshops, and studio critiques with students.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission is \$10 for adults, and \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID). Free: children 12 and under, active duty military (with ID), Corcoran Members.

## 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](http://www.corcoran.org).



Images:  
Page one: Ellen Harvey, *Alien Souvenir Stand*, 2013. Oil on aluminum, watercolor and latex paint on clayboard, wood, aluminum sheeting, propane tanks, and Velcro. 10 x 17 x 5 ft. Photo: Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Page two: Ellen Harvey, *Alien Rocket-Ship: The Latest in Pillar-Builder Space Travel*, 2013. Aluminum pillar. 20 x 2 ft. Photo: Corcoran Gallery of Art.

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