

CORCORAN

GALLERY OF ART • COLLEGE of ART + DESIGN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CORCORAN PRESENTS *IVAN SIGAL: WHITE ROAD*
November 3, 2012–January 27, 2013



WASHINGTON, D.C. – This fall, the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design** presents *Ivan Sigal: White Road* (November 3, 2012-January 27, 2013), an exhibition of approximately 100 photographs made in Central Asia between 1998 and 2005. During this eight-year period, Sigal lived and traveled in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan, among other countries in the former Soviet Union and Asia. A designer of media projects, he collaborated with local communities to set up radio and TV stations, create current affairs programming, and train journalists.

Alongside these activities, Sigal worked as an itinerant documentarian, using his camera to record the unsettled lives of Eurasians in provincial towns and cities. Showing people of different ages, nationalities, ethnic and religious origins, and class, Sigal's moody, humanistic images reveal both joy and hardship. Sigal's first solo museum exhibition addresses an elusive question: What was left behind when the Soviet Union's ideological superstructure was dismantled, eliminating the grand narrative that once imposed meaning on people's lives? Organized by the Paul Roth, senior curator and director of photography and media arts, *White Road* reveals a diverse population adapting in extraordinary times. The exhibition is accompanied by a two-volume, 471-page book of the same title, published by Steidl. Using both imagery and

text, Sigal's project considers the mysterious circumstances of history and power that propel us—the photographer, his subjects, and those who view the work—from encounter to encounter and from place to place, in a destabilized and uncertain time.

Engaged in his work, the empowerment of local people to tell their own stories, Sigal was freed from any traditional news-gathering responsibility. He thus focused his own photography on neither specific events nor the regional crises that animate much conventional reportage; instead, he sought to make photographs more allusive than descriptive, more poetic than reportorial, and, ultimately, more revelatory about the enigmas of daily life. In effect, the historic demographic shifts he encountered and the peripatetic nature of his work led Sigal to adopt an oblique approach, one outside the bounds of conventional documentary photography: an exploration without a fixed destination, a search with no apparent goal. The title of this exhibition comes from the term “white road,” which means “safe journey” in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek. These words are imprinted on road signs at the edges of Central Asian towns, wishing travelers well as they enter the vast and empty steppe.

Both the exhibition and accompanying catalogue are organized in an unusual sequence, using repetition and pictorial echo to create a series of roundelays, like a song with a refrain. At times Sigal takes us to a scene, leaves for another, then returns to the first. Or his camera dissects a juncture, stuttering a single occurrence or person across multiple frames. “*White Road* upends the traditional narrative structures used by documentary photographers,” says curator Paul Roth. “Normally we might see photographs from Central Asia illustrating an urgent news account in a magazine, or sequenced to tell a story in an online slide show. By ordering the images more rhythmically than narratively, however, Sigal is trying to establish a richer, deeper connection between the viewer, his subjects, and himself, so that we start to see the commonality between our experience and those of the people in the photographs.”



Support for Ivan Sigal: White Road is generously provided by the Family Alliance Foundation.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ivan Sigal is a documentary photographer who works on long-term storytelling projects. Born in 1969, he has lived for extensive periods in the former Soviet Union and Asia. His photographs of Eurasia have been exhibited in cities across the former Soviet Union and in the United States. Sigal also designs and creates media projects around the world, with a focus on networked communities. Since 2008, he has served as executive director of Global Voices Online. *White Road* is Sigal's first solo museum exhibition.

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

A hardcover two-volume book of the same title, printed in tritone, accompanies the exhibition. Published by Steidl with text and images by Ivan Sigal and an afterword by Paul Roth. Book design: Ivan Sigal, Paul Roth, Bernard Fischer. Book edit and sequencing: Ivan Sigal, Paul Roth. Text edit: Nicholas Laughlin. Printed in Germany by Steidl. ISBN 978-3-86930-538-7. First Edition, 2012. 471 pages. \$85.00.

ARTIST'S TALK: IVAN SIGAL

Monday, November 12; 7 p.m.

Corcoran Members \$10, Public \$12; Full-time Students \$6

Pre-registration required at https://getinvolved.corcoran.org/ivan_sigal

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

Artist Ivan Sigal discusses the changing ways photographers tell stories in online and digital platforms, focusing on the shift from traditional narrative structures as found in photo essays and books to the aesthetic possibilities of digital storytelling. Sigal is the executive director of Global Voices, a nonprofit online global citizens' media initiative.

RELATED COLLEGE COURSE

Alongside the exhibition, Sigal is teaching a semester-long course for students enrolled in the Corcoran College of Art + Design's innovative New Media Photojournalism graduate program. Called "New Directions in Visual Storytelling," the course focuses on alternative production and distribution paths for visual storytelling, photojournalism, and documentary photography.

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 *Ivan Sigal: White Road* is \$10 for adults, and \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID). Children 12 and under, active duty military (with valid 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 *Ivan Sigal: White Road* 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: Ivan Sigal, *Murghab, Tajikistan*, 2003. Gelatin silver print. Image courtesy of the artist. (c) Ivan Sigal.

Page two: Ivan Sigal, *Kabul, Afghanistan*, 2004. Gelatin silver print. Image courtesy of the artist. (c) Ivan Sigal.

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