

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

February 25, 2016

PAPERWORK AND THE WILL OF CAPITAL

TARYN SIMON



February 18–March 26, 2016

Opening reception
Thursday, February 18, 6–8PM

Gagosian Gallery
555 West 24th Street, New York
www.gagosian.com

These flowers sat between powerful men as they signed agreements designed to influence the fate of the world.
—Taryn Simon

Gagosian is pleased to present Taryn Simon's first exhibition at the New York gallery, of sculptures and photographs. The sculptures—Simon's first foray into the medium—previewed at the 56th Biennale di Venezia in 2015; this exhibition brings them together with large-scale, annotated photographs as a complete body of work for the first time.

The new series comprises 12 unique sculptures and 36 editioned photographs. The photographs—large, colorful, and spectacular with a nod to Pop art, and custom-framed in mahogany to emulate the style of boardroom furniture—speak to the bombast of national and corporate symbolism; the sculptures—stylized concrete flower-presses containing delicate preserved floral specimens and their documentation—operate in a discrete and classified zone.

A storyteller whose grist is the instability of fact, Simon's research-driven approach has produced such impactful bodies of work as *The Innocents* (2002); *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* (2007); *Contraband* (2010); and *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII* (2008–11); as well as the more whimsical *The Picture Collection* (2013), and *Birds of the West Indies* (2013–14). Simon takes empirical photography into the field of post-conceptual practice, with exacting attention to aesthetic and formal concerns.

For the new work, Simon's investigations yielded twin points of departure: archival photographs of official signings; and George Sinclair's nineteenth century horticultural study containing actual dried grass specimens, an experiment in evolution and survival cited by Charles Darwin in his groundbreaking research.

In *Paperwork and the Will of Capital*, Simon examines accords, treaties, and decrees drafted to influence systems of governance and economics, from nuclear armament to oil deals and diamond trading. All involve the countries present at the 1944 United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, which addressed the globalization of economics after World War II, leading to the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In images of the signings of these documents, powerful men flank floral centerpieces designed to underscore the importance of the parties present. Simon's photographs of the recreated centerpieces from

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these signings, together with their stories, underscore how the stagecraft of political and economic power is created, performed, marketed, and maintained.

Each of Simon's recreations of these floral arrangements represents an "impossible bouquet"—a concept that emerged in Dutch still-life painting parallel to the country's seventeenth-century economic boom, which ushered in the development of modern capitalism. Then, the impossible bouquet was an artificial fantasy of flowers that could never bloom naturally in the same season and geographic location. Now the fantasy is made possible—both in the original signings and in Simon's photographs—by the global consumer market.

For the recreations, Simon worked with a botanist and from archival records to identify all the flowers. She imported more than 4000 specimens from the world's largest flower auction in Aalsmeer, Netherlands, where 20 million flowers arrive and depart daily, bound for international retail destinations. She remade the floral arrangements from each signing, then photographed them against striking bicolored fields relating to the foregrounds and backgrounds in the historical images, pairing each arrangement with a description of the pertinent accord. For the sculptures, selected specimens from the 36 arrangements were dried, pressed, and sewn to archival herbarium paper; a complete set of the 36 botanical collages was then placed in each of the 12 concrete presses, along with the same number of photographs and narrative texts—sealed together in a race against time.

Paperwork and the Will of Capital addresses the instability of executive decision-making and the precarious nature of survival, as well as the reliability and endurance of records: the accords and their far-reaching effects, Simon's photographs, and the preserved botanical specimens in their concrete presses; language itself. The photographic still lifes stand in contrast to the sculptural *natures mortes*: as time advances, so may these artifacts transform, revealing mutable versions of themselves.

A fully illustrated catalogue published by Hatje Cantz and Gagosian will include essays by Kate Fowle and Nicholas Kulish, botanical texts by Daniel Atha, and a short story by Hanan al-Shaykh.

Taryn Simon (b. 1975) lives and works in New York City. She graduated from Brown University and was the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2001. Permanent collections include Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; LACMA, Los Angeles; Tate Modern, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and MMK, Frankfurt.

Recent museum exhibitions include "Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007); "A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII," Tate Modern, London (2011, traveled to Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing); and "Rear Views, A Star-forming Nebula, and the Office of Foreign Propaganda," Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (2015). Her work was included in the Gwangju Biennale (2008), Singapore Biennial (2011), 2013 Carnegie International, Yokohama Triennale (2014), and the 56th Biennale di Venezia (2015).

Simon's *Birds of the West Indies I and II* (2013–14) will be on view at the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, New York from February 13–May 15 of this year. *Paperwork and the Will of Capital* will be exhibited at Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow in March, at Gagosian Rome in April and May of this year and other institutional venues during 2016–17. Major solo exhibitions are planned at Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague and The Louisiana Museum, Denmark in 2016. From March 21 until January 2017, a chapter from Simon's *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII* (2011) will be on view at Centre Pompidou as part of the exhibition "CHERS AMIS", curated by Christine Macel.

Simon is also currently working on her first work involving live performers, jointly commissioned by Park Avenue Armory, New York and Artangel, London. This as-yet unnamed work will premier in New York in September 2016 before moving on to London in November of this year.

For further information please contact the gallery at newyork@gagosian.com or at +1.212.741.1111. All images are subject to copyright. Gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

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Gagosian Gallery was established in 1980 by Larry Gagosian.