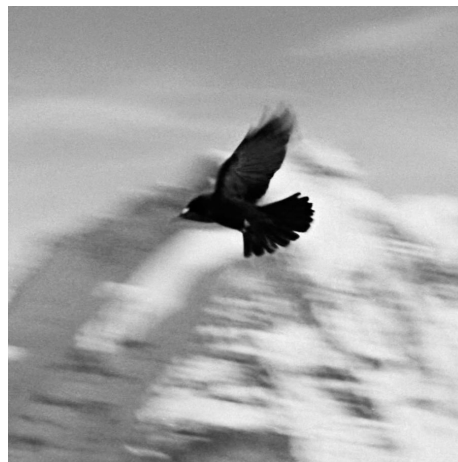


GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Taryn Simon Explores Lies, Bond Girls and Ornithology in Latest Exhibition at Gagosian Gallery

Shana Beth Mason



*Taryn Simon, Switzerland (detail), 2014, archival inkjet prints in boxed mat and aluminum frame
39 7/8 x 79 7/16 inches. Copyright 2014 Taryn Simon. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills*

Ian Fleming was a thief. He flat-out admitted to it. Upon moving to his estate (named Goldeneye) near Oracabessa, Jamaica in 1952, he brought with him a field guide to identify and categorize local bird life. That book was *Birds of the West Indies* by a certain ornithologist, James Bond. Later in his life, Fleming told an interviewer, "When I started these [Bond] books! I wanted to find a very flat, quiet name, and one of my bibles out here is *Birds of the West Indies* by James Bond. And I thought, 'well James Bond, that's a very boring, quiet name.' So, I simply stole it and used it."

Artist Taryn Simon now steals, critically and thoughtfully, from Fleming in her latest solo exhibition with Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills. She personally analyzed scenes from each of the 24 formally identified films of the Bond 'canon', finding elements where birds appear. In this digital age, filmmakers eliminate moments where birds or other flying objects interfere with cinematic continuity. But Simon elects to highlight these unintentional frames, citing a disparity between the world we inhabit (full of unintended occurrences or 'accidents') and the world we escape to at the movies (almost devoid of such 'accidents'). Full of irony, these blurry images are similar to the hidden surveillance cameras that agents or secret intelligence organization used at that time.

Other visual sectors of the exhibition include photographs of Bond women as they appear now (effectively destroying mythologies surrounding the 'timeless' beauty and sex appeal of the codified 'Bond girl'). There is also a film about the uncredited voice artist Nikki van der Zyl (who dubbed most of the Bond girls throughout the years and was, and continues to be, denied recognition due to the producers' efforts to maintain the total 'Bond girl' image) and various items belonging to James Bond, the real-life ornithologist.

This isn't just an exhibition catering to the die-hard Bond fan (as this author, unashamedly, is), it's a journey into the complex layers of Hollywood filmmaking and how it continues to shape and warp the collective consciousness of a generation.

Taryn Simon: Birds of the West Indies opened on February 27 and runs through April 12, 2014 at Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills.