

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



THE ART NEWSPAPER



Sally Mann's *Untitled 61*, 2000, from the series "What Remains"
Gelatin, silver print, 30in by 38in

CREDIT: SALLY MANN, COURTESY OF GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Wellcome confronts the last taboo: death

"We don't talk much about what happens when we die. Years ago, sex was the unmentionable thing; now it's death. This modern form of prudery encourages the spectacle of funerary pomp and the ironic sight of cemetery visitors picking wild flowers from the grave sites that hold literally more of the dead than the carved tombstone ever could. Although I've never been prone to that almost universal form of squeamishness, I have long been afflicted with the metaphysical question of death: what does remain? What becomes of us, of our being?"

So writes the artist Sally Mann in her illustrated memoir *Hold Still* which will be published by Little, Brown and Company this May. Mann's work also features in the exhibition, "Forensics: the Anatomy of Crime", the second to be held in the Wellcome Collection's new galleries in London after a £17.5m development (until 21 June). It charts the science and history of forensic medicine, presenting works of art alongside specimens and original evidence given in murder trials, archival material and laboratory instruments.

Mann's oddly peaceful images of "The Body Farm", 2000-01, photographs taken of decomposing corpses at the University of Tennessee's forensic-anthropology unit, sit alongside a "Kusōzu" sequence of nine 18th-century Japanese watercolour paintings detailing the deterioration of a dead noble woman, and Jeffrey Silverthorne's unflinching photographs from a Rhode Island morgue ("Morgue Work", 1972-91).

Artist Sejla Kamberic has created a vast data monument to the dead and missing from the Bosnian War that claimed her father. The work, *Ab Uno Disce*

Omnes (From One, Learn All), 2014, was commissioned by the Wellcome Collection. It comprises a mortuary fridge with a screen displaying images from Kamberic's search for information, through satellite images, to records and around 30,000 photographs and hours of video. It is testament to the scale of the war and the impact of the dead on the living.

The ugliness of murder is brought into the museum with the work of Mexican artist Teresa Margolles, including a display of 313 front pages of a local newspaper that chronicles the daily victims of the country's drug war, *PM 2010*, 2012. In the section of the exhibition called "The Crime Scene", Margolles has transplanted the floor tiles on which her artist friend, Luis Miguel Suro, was shot and killed, in a work called *32 Años—Suelo donde cayo el cuerpo asesinado del artista Luis Miguel Suro*, 2006. Her third work in the show is an audio recording of a double autopsy, *Sonidos de la Morgue* (Sounds of the Morgue), 2003.

"Many of the artists featured in this exhibition have had a direct relationship with the world of forensics, some of which have involved extremely personal encounters," says Lucy Shanahan, the curator of the show. "This intimate perspective enables an immediate engagement with the ethical, moral and political questions their work raises in relation to violence and injustice, by allowing us to see through their eyes."

Charlotte Burns

- "Forensics: the Anatomy of Crime", Wellcome Collection, London, until 21 June
- *Hold Still* by Sally Mann will be published by Little, Brown and Company in May