

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Taryn Simon: Paperwork and the Will of Capital *Flowers, politics and the fate of the world at Gagosian Rome*

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Image: Taryn Simon. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery

In the hands of American artist Taryn Simon, flower arrangements become vehicles to reflect on the strange theatre of politics and power play. Simon's brilliance of vision sees her create simple images with a Zen beauty that simultaneously communicate complex and uncomfortable sentiments through their backstories. In her latest series of works (from \$85,000 each) – 12 unique concrete flower-press sculptures and 36 editioned photographs of floral arrangements, entitled *Paperwork and the Will of Capital* – she depicts the flowers that “sat between powerful men as they signed agreements designed to influence the fate of the world”. The exhibition is being shown at Gagosian Rome from April 14 until June 24; Simon last showed in Italy as part of the Venice Biennale in 2015, but this is to be her first solo show in the country.

The contrast between the stylish minimalism of the flowers and the manipulative impact of many of the political treaties she has chosen – from *Gdańsk Agreement. Gdańsk Shipyards, Gdańsk, Poland, August 31, 1980* (first picture) to *Agreement for Cooperation on China's Beidou Navigation Satellite System in Pakistan. Aiwān-e-Sadr, Islamabad, Pakistan, May 22, 2013* (second picture) – gives the pictures an unsettling poignancy. The block backgrounds of flat colour render the painstakingly composed floral centrepieces a little bit pop, the flowers themselves are “impossible bouquets” (arrangements that could not bloom in the same season or location) hand-selected from the world's largest flower market in the Netherlands, while the

custom wooden frames with inbuilt labels add a midcentury modern element that's both understated and intimates that they should be considered part of an archive, rather than a contemporary look back. It's a compelling mix that elicits multilayered interpretations.

Indeed, Simon is a research-based artist who is equally invested in the stories behind her work as she is in the final product. Museums from the Pompidou and Tate to MoMA and MOCA have previously given her solo exhibitions, and she's currently preparing her first performance piece for a joint commission from Park Avenue Armory, New York, and Artangel, London. As yet unnamed, the work will premiere in New York in September before moving on to London in November.

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