

CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN GENÈVE

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PRESS RELEASE
MARCH 2011

TARYN SIMON

(*1975)

21.04 – 24.07.2011

The American artist Taryn Simon's first solo show in Switzerland introduces her most recent work, "Contraband" (2010), an analysis of the John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, one of the world's major transport hubs, and its passengers. Created as a result of an arduous and physically demanding sojourn at the airport requiring the artist to adjust to its relentless 24hr rhythm, "Contraband" functions as a time-capsule of early 21st century global experience.

Taryn Simon uses photography as a means to address specific cultural and political phenomena within American society. By casting light on unexpected places and the customs associated with them, her work reveals the underlying mechanisms that make a society what it is – its history and founding myths, its anxieties and aspirations, its taboos and paradoxes. Simon used a labour-intensive, forensic photographic procedure: she photographed each item against a neutral grey background, producing an 'objective' scientific record, devoid of context. Removed from the individual passenger's belongings, each item loses its distinguishing personal associations and is transformed into an artifact of the larger global network.

In the earlier work "An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar" (2007), Simon documented places that form an intrinsic part of the history and foundations of the United States, places that belong to its mythology and daily existence, but which remain inaccessible or unknown to the wider public. In doing so, she explored the discreet intersection between the public and private realms.

With "Contraband" (2010), Simon explores new ground while staying in line with "An American Index ...". The images document illegal, prohibited, pirated and/or counterfeited items detained or seized from passengers and express mail entering the United States from abroad – ranging from pharmaceuticals or drugs to Cuban cigars or animal body parts.

The artist conceived of the series as a performance in itself, reproducing the actual flow of goods that pass through the airport: over a five-day period, she and her team lived the round-the-clock rhythm of JFK airport, one of the main transit points for people entering the United States. The rigorous photographic approach is reinforced by the series' alphabetical presentation, drawing on the methodology of science. The objects are presented on a neutral backdrop, quite removed from their original context among a traveler's personal belongings. The array of goods functions like an inventory of international trade, laying bare the mechanisms – the desires and needs – of our globalised society at the start of the 21st century.

The American artist Taryn Simon was born in New York in 1975 and graduated from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. Now a major figure in contemporary photography, she won the Prix Découverte at the Rencontres d'Arles, where she was

presented by Philippe Parreno and Hans Ulrich Obrist. She is currently working on a project for spring 2011 to be shown at Tate Modern, London, and the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin. Simon is also participating in the 54th Venice Biennale, where her work will be exhibited in the Danish pavilion.

Her photography and writing have appeared in numerous publications and broadcasts, including *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, Ted.com, CNN, BBC and Frontline.

Curator : Katya García-Antón

SAVE THE DATES :

Exhibition	21.04 – 24.07.2011
Press	20.04.2011 at 4pm
Opening	20.04.2011 at 6pm
Arty Night : round table	21.07.2011 at 7pm

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES:

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