

GAA GALLERY

JOHANNAH HERR

HOW TO HIDE AN EMPIRE

November 12, 2022 - January 7, 2023

Gaa Projects Cologne

Gaa Projects is pleased to announce the opening of Johannah Herr's solo exhibition, *How to Hide an Empire*. The show takes its name from Daniel Immerwahr's book of the same name, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*. Herr mined the text for her research and presents a body of work concerned entirely with forgotten or unseen US imperialist aggression.

The exhibit is comprised of machine-tufted rugs that utilize the visual strategies of Afghan war rugs. As such, it is a continuation of Herr's earlier exploration of this genre as a way of subverting an artform that, in Afghanistan, was used to document the Soviet and subsequent American invasions. Such rugs were then sold to invading soldiers, and even available through the major US department store, Sears. By subverting this visual rhetoric, Herr highlights the US' role as an aggressor and invader, rather than the "liberator" that it likes to perceive itself as.

Each rug in *How to Hide an Empire* features a historical moment when the US stepped outside of its sovereign borders to meddle in a foreign land—whether via proxy wars during the Cold War and/or to support the overthrow of legitimate governments unfriendly to US business interests. Herr draws attention to the inherent hypocrisy of a country that pretends to be a bastion of democracy yet tramples the rights of foreign citizens and undermines democratically elected governments everywhere.

These particular rugs speak to lesser-known events. Importantly, all of the historical events showcased in the rugs were acts that were either deliberately committed in secret by the CIA or purposefully obfuscated from the American public in order to maintain the mythology of the US as a "good actor" in the world. Also, several of the rugs have a direct through-line to contemporary events. For example, one depicts Operation Paper, which was the first time the US worked with rebel groups that funded themselves via drug trafficking, a model replicated later in Mexico, Colombia, and Afghanistan in which the US created a drug trade to criminalize certain behaviors and control various populations. Another rug handles the Phoenix Program, which was the first time the US codified torture and torture of civilians into our official policy.

The show also features thematically pertinent wallpaper and four titles from ¡AGITPOP! PRESS, Herr's ongoing collaborative artist book project with writer Cara Marsh Sheffler.

How to Hide an Empire will be on view through January 7, 2023. The artist and gallery will donate 5% of the sale of each rug to the USCRI's Afghanistan Assistance Fund.

Text by Cara Marsh Sheffler

Johannah Herr (b.1987 in Reading, PA) Johannah Herr holds an MFA in Sculpture from Cranbrook Academy of Art (2016) and a BFA in Fine Arts from Parsons School of Design (2009). She has had solo shows at The Shirley Fiterman Art Center, Spring Break Art Fair, Geary Contemporary, Elijah Wheat Showroom, Untitled San Francisco, BRIC and Envoy Enterprises (all New York, NY), Red Ger Gallery (Ulaabaatar, Mongolia) and Galeri Metropol (Tallinn, Estonia) and been featured in group shows at Pioneer Works (Brooklyn, NY), Visual Arts Center of New Jersey (Summit, NJ), Center for Contemporary Art (Warsaw, Poland) and DADApost (Berlin). She is a Fulbright Scholar (Mongolia) and has attended residencies at the Museum of Arts and Design (New York, NY), SIM (Reykjavik, Iceland), Wassaic Project (Wassaic, NY), IEA's Experimental Projects Residency (Alfred, NY), Oxbow Artists Residency (Saugatuk, MI), Vermont Studio Center (Johnson, VT), BRIC (Brooklyn, NY) and the Arctic Circle Residency (Svalbard, International Territory). She currently teaches at Parsons School of Design, Pratt Institute, and New York University. Additionally, she is the Co-Founder of Daughters Rising, an anti-human trafficking, indigenous women's empowerment NGO based in Mae Wang, Thailand. She lives and works between Brooklyn and Mae Wang.

JOHANNAH HERR - *HOW TO HIDE AN EMPIRE*



Johannah Herr
American War Rug XI (Secret War In Laos), 2022
Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
160 x 84 cm / 63 x 33 in



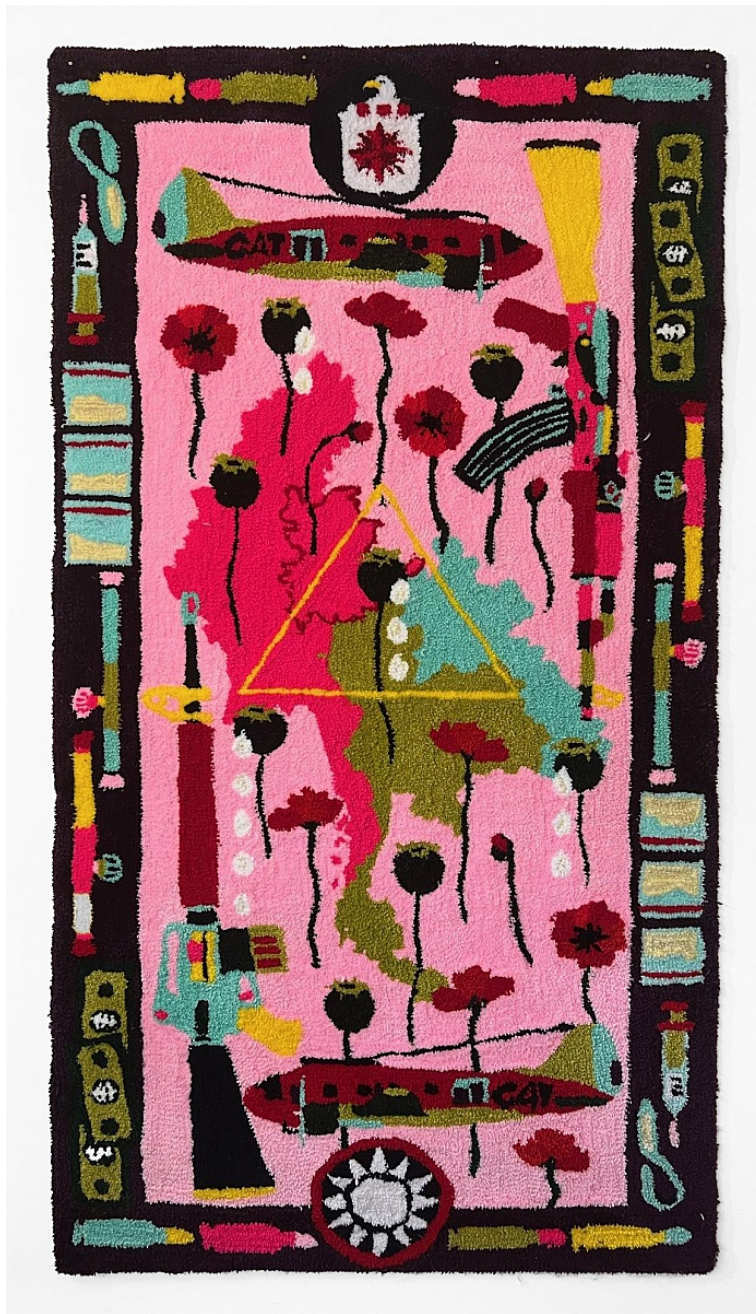
Johannah Herr
American War Rug XII (Iran, 1953), 2022
Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
122 x 86.5 cm / 48 x 34 in



Johannah Herr
American War Rug XIII (Guatemala, 1954), 2022
Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
122 x 86.5 cm / 48 x 34 in



Johannah Herr
American War Rug XIV (Congo, 1961), 2022
Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
122 x 86.5 cm / 48 x 34 in



Johannah Herr
American War Rug XV (Operation Paper), 2022
Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
160 x 86.5 cm / 63 x 34 in



Johannah Herr
American War Rug XVI (Marshall Islands, 1946-58), 2022
Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
160 x 84 cm / 63 x 33 in



Johannah Herr
American War Rug XVII (Hawaii, 1893), 2022
Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
160 x 91.5 cm / 63 x 36 in



Johannah Herr
American War Rug XVIII (Phoenix Program), 2022
Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
155 x 84 cm / 61 x 33 in

GAA GALLERY

JOHANNAH HERR

BORN

1987, Reading, PA, USA

SELECTED SOLO + TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *How to Hide an Empire*, Gaa Projects, Cologne, Germany
I Have Seen the Future: The American Home, Shirley Fiterman Art Center, New York, NY, USA
Power Lunch, Spring Break Art Show, New York, NY, USA
Banana Republics, Smallbany, Albany, NY, USA
I Have Seen the Future, Field Projects, New York, NY, USA
- 2021 *Above The Fruited Plain (America! America!)*, Geary Contemporary for NADA, House, New York, NY, USA
- 2020 *Domestic Terrorism: War Rugs from America*, Elijah Wheat Showroom, Newburgh, NY, USA
Johannah Herr - New Works, Geary Contemporary for Untitled Art Fair, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 2019 *Redaction Order*, Geary Contemporary, New York, NY, USA
- 2018 *Your Comfort is Attended by Permanent Violence*, Bric Art FP, Brooklyn, NY, USA
Patenting Distraction, Elijah Wheat Showroom, Brooklyn, NY, USA
- 2017 *Moll Madness*, with Joseph Kraska, Elijah Wheat Showroom, Brooklyn, NY, USA
- 2014 *Eat With Both Mouths*, Galeri Metropol, Tallinn, Estonia
Harlem/Haarlem, Chashama Windowspace Program, New York, NY, USA
- 2012 *Homeland(s)*, Red Ger Gallery, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Town Crier: Queer Storytelling*, curated by Autumn Wallace, Gaa Projects, Cologne, Germany
Bananas, Fortmakers, New York, NY, USA
- 2020 *Flat Files OyG: 2020*, Ortega Y Gasset, Brooklyn, NY, USA
- 2019 *Summer Exhibition*, Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY, USA
- 2018 *Creative Time Summit in Miami*, Curated by Stroboskop + The Muted Horn, Center for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, Poland
System Processing, Sap, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI, USA
Oh What a World, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ, USA
- 2017 *Suspended States*, Tesselate, Pontiac, MI, USA
Re:Re:Re:Re:Re:, RE:ARTSHOW, Brooklyn, NY, USA
Collider 8, Emily Davis Gallery, University of Akron, Akron, OH, USA
- 2016 *Water Tower Arts Festival*, Nuance Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria
Tower of Babel, Schema Projects, Brooklyn, NY, Givatayim City Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel + Centro Per L'arte Contemporanea, Treviso, Italy
The Real Real Spectacle, Cave, Detroit, MI, USA
- 2015 *Flux*, Sculpture X Symposium, Forum Gallery, Bloomfield Hills, MI, USA
Innbakaður Fiskur, SÍM Gallery, Reykjavik, Iceland
*/ *, Forum Gallery, Bloomfield Hills, MI, USA
- 2014 *The Battery Project*, Patarei Prison, Tallinn, Estonia
Temporary-Protected Spaces, Water Tower Art Festival, Sofia, Bulgaria
- 2013 *Beasts and Bodies*, Schema Projects, Brooklyn, NY, USA
Parsons Alumni Exhibition, Sheila Johnson Gallery, New York, NY, USA
The Collective Show, Neter, Mexico City, Mexico
Temporary-Protected Spaces, Water Tower Art Festival, Sofia, Bulgaria
Drafted, Schema Projects, Brooklyn, NY, USA
- 2011 *Art on the Farm*, Collaborative Concepts on Saunders Farm, Garrison, NY, USA
Post, Affordable Art Fair - Booth A11, New York, NY, USA
- 2010 *A Liminal State*, Art in Bushwick's Beta Spaces, 56 Bogart, Brooklyn, NY, USA
Bittersweet: The Chocolate Show, Paul Robeson Gallery, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ, USA
Magicality, Platform Gallery, Seattle, WA, USA
Figment Art Festival, Governors Island, NY, USA
Works on Paper, Big & Small / Casual Gallery, Long Island City, NY, USA
Heed the Machine, Illustrious, St. Cecelia Convent, Brooklyn, NY, USA
Youth Cult, Dadapost, Berlin, Germany
Artists For: Haiti, Envoy Enterprises, New York, NY, USA

GAA GALLERY

(SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS CONT.)

- 2009 *Beauteous Abjectus*, Space Womb, Long Island City, NY, USA
Gruntwork, 31 Ebertsstrasse, Berlin, Germany
Windows Brooklyn, Rapisarda, Brooklyn, NY, USA
I Love Everything, Envoy Enterprises, New York, NY, USA

PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONS

- 2024 PS169Q, Queens, NY, USA (Upcoming)
2021 Taking Stock, Brookfield Projects 1 Liberty Plaza, New York, NY, USA
2019 Currency, Brookfield Projects 1 New York Plaza, New York, NY, USA
Currency II, Brookfield Projects, 1 MetroTech, Brooklyn, NY, USA

SELECTED AWARDS, GRANTS, + FELLOWSHIPS

- 2022 The Arctic Circle Residency, Svalbard, International Territory
2021 BRIClab, Contemporary Art Residency, Brooklyn, NY, USA
2019 Artist in Residence Fellowship, Vermont, Studio Center, Johnson, VT, USA
2018 Artist in Residence, Institute of ElectronicArts, Alfred University, Experimental Projects Residency, Alfred, NY, USA
Artist in Residence, Wassaic Artist Residency, Wassaic, NY, USA
2017 Artist in Residence, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY, USA
2016 Cranbrook Oxbow Fellowship, Oxbow School of Art, Saugatuck, MI, USA
2015 Artist in Residence, SÍM, Reykjavik, Iceland
Distinguished Fellow, Hambidge Center for Creative Arts and Sciences, Rabun Gap, GA, USA
Larson Travel Grant, Iceland
Cranbrook Merit Scholarship
2012 Fulbright Research Scholar, Mongolia

EDUCATION

- 2016 MFA, Cranbrook Academy of Fine Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI, USA
2009 BFA, Parsons School of Design, New York, NY, USA
2008 Exchange Program, Chelsea College of Art, London, England

SELECTED PRESS + PUBLICATIONS + WORKS CITED

- 2022 "What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now" by Jillian Steinhauer, New York Times.
2021 "Exploring The Design Appeal of Bananas" by Osman Can Yerebakan, Curbed.
"The Banana As Muse" by Flo Fabricant, New York Times.
"On Governor's Island, Art Interventions Are Everywhere" by Roberta Smith, New York Times.
2020 "Socially Distanced Studio Visits" by Caroline Kipp
"Untitled, Art San Francisco: 5 Galleries We're Happy To See at This Weekend's Fair, by Colleen Hochberger, Artspace.
2018 Maake Magazine, Issue 8
"System Processing," published by Grand Valley State University
2017 "Snuggies for the Revolution" are the Coziest Way to Fight the Power, by Imran Hafiz, VICE.
2016 Folio 16, Cranbrook Academy of Art
2013 Posture Magazine, May 31, by Posture Media
2010 Bittersweet: The Chocolate Show, published by Paul Robeson Gallery

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Institute of Electronic Arts, Alfred University, Alfred, NY, USA
Davidson College, Davidson, NC, USA