

Widewalls: 'Taryn Simon Invited 11 Professional Mourners for Her London Performance', by Angie Kordic, 12 April 2018

Taryn Simon Invited 11 Professional Mourners for Her London Performance

Art Exhibitions



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Highly regarded in some cultures and vilified in others, **professional mourners** have been around for centuries, paid to deliver a eulogy or simply express lament.

Now, **eleven of them** will become a part of **an art performance in London**.

Internationally acclaimed artist **Taryn Simon** will deliver **her first ever major performative work in the city** through **An Occupation of Loss**, a project initiated in the United States in 2016. This time round, it will be orchestrated by the collective presence and movement of the audience around one of London's unexplored subterranean locations.



Taryn Simon – Haji Rahila Jafarova and Lala Ismayilova, Yezidi performers from Azerbaijan, An Occupation of Loss, 2016. A co-commission by Artangel and Park Avenue Armory Photograph by Taryn Simon

An Occupation of Loss

In a way, professional mourners could be described as those who **have given a face and a voice to loss and the experience of it**, with permission that has been neglected and marginalized more often than not.

Through the act of **lamentation**, we find ways to **process grief** and to **better manage our understanding of death**, both our own and of our loved ones, as something inevitable, certain.

For this occasion, [Taryn Simon](#) will turn the site of the performance into a sonic instrument that expresses emotion beyond language, through professionals that are doing their work away from their usual contexts. She said:

Loss yields an emotional space and a vulnerability in which individuals seem to operate without artifice. I wanted to look at the potential of this space, and the mechanics of it – even the ways it can be programmed or performed. I started thinking about how we mourn individually, nationally, globally – how organized religion, government or civic leadership guides and shapes mourning and how citizens are mobilized in those moments of loss.



Taryn Simon – Hugo Anibal González Jiménez, Ecuador, *An Occupation of Loss*, 2016. A co-commission by Artangel and Park Avenue Armory Photograph by Taryn Simon

The Mourners

Taryn Simon's *An Occupation of Loss* will have a total of **11 mourners from 11 different countries** around the world creating a unique tension between themselves and the audience, but also standing as a sort of connection between the dead and the living, the past and the present.

The mourners will recite laments from their respective countries: from Albania, there will be those excavating "uncried words"; the safeguarding of the soul's passage to the Milky Way will be reflected in Venezuelan rituals; the Greek ones will bind the story of life with its afterlife; while the Yezidi laments will map a topography of displacement and exile.



Taryn Simon – Mrike Nokaj, Albania, *An Occupation of Loss*, 2016. A co-commission by Artangel and Park Avenue Armory Photograph by Taryn Simon

Taryn Simon in London

An Occupation of Loss, co-commissioned by [Artangel](#) and New York's [Park Avenue Armory](#), will be presented in a cavernous undiscovered space beneath Islington Green in London **between April 17th and 28th, 2018**. Entrance to the show is on Essex Road.

Performance times will be Monday – Thursday at 6pm, 7pm, 8pm and 9pm, Friday – Saturday at 5pm, 6pm, 7pm, 8pm, 9pm, and 10pm. No performances on Sundays.

Taryn Simon will also be in conversation with the Director of Tate Modern, Frances Morris, on April 26th at King's College in London. The artist will also sign copies of her new book.

Editors' Tip: *Taryn Simon: An Occupation of Loss*



In her monograph, *An Occupation of Loss*, artist Taryn Simon creates a detailed record of her years researching professional mourning, culminating in a seminal performance at the Park Avenue Armory, co-produced by Artangel, in 2016. During the installation, professional mourners simultaneously broadcast their lamentations within a monumental sculptural setting, enacting rituals of grief. The installation combined performance, sound, and architecture to consider the anatomy of grief and the intricate systems we use to manage fate and uncertainty. The book leads the reader through the complicated visa application process for the mourners invited to enter the United States, revealing the underlying structures governing global exchange, the movement of bodies, and the hierarchies of art and culture.

Featured images: Taryn Simon – Marisol Rosalía Fernández and Ana Fernández, Venezuela, *An Occupation of Loss*, 2016. A co-commission by Artangel and Park Avenue Armory © Photograph by Taryn Simon Taryn Simon © Photograph by Thomas Dozol.