ALMINE RECH

Taryn Simon
A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I - XVIII

Sep 21, 2011 — Jan 1, 2012 | Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin

A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters was produced over a four-year period (2008-11), during which the artist, Taryn Simon, travelled around the world researching and recording bloodlines and their related stories. In each of the eighteen chapters that make up the work, the external forces of territory, power, circumstance or religion collide with the internal forces of psychological and physical inheritance.

The subjects documented by Simon include feuding families in Brazil, victims of genocide in Bosnia, the body double of Saddam Hussein's son Uday, and the living dead in India. Her collection is at once cohesive and arbitrary, mapping the relationships among chance, blood, and other components of fate.

Each work in *A Living Man Declared Dead* is comprised of three segments. On the left of each chapter are one or more large portrait panels systematically ordering a number of individuals directly related by blood. The sequence of portraits is structured to include the living ascendants and descendants of a single individual. The portraits are followed by a central text panel in which the artist constructs narratives and collects details. On the right are Simon's "footnote images" representing fragmented pieces of the established narratives and providing photographic evidence.

Simon's presentation explores the struggle to determine codes and patterns embedded in the narratives she documents, making them recognizable as variations (versions, renderings, adaptations) of archetypal episodes from the present, past, and future. In contrast to the methodical ordering of a bloodline, the central elements of the stories violence, resilience, corruption, and survival disorient the highly structured appearance of the work. *A Living Man Declared Dead* and Other Chapters highlights the space between text and image, absence and presence, and order and disorder.

Taryn Simon was born in 1975 in New York, where she lives and works. Her previous work included Contraband 2010, an archive of images of items that were detained or seized from passengers and mail entering the United States from abroad; *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* 2007, which reveals objects, sites, and spaces that are integral to America's foundation, mythology, or daily functioning but remain inaccessible or unknown to a public audience; and The Innocents 2003, which documents cases of wrongful conviction in the United States, calling into question photography's function as a credible witness and arbiter of justice.