ALMINE RECH

Taryn Simon
Contraband

Oct 29 — Dec 18, 2010 | Brussels

Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels, is pleased to present *CONTRABAND*, a new commission by acclaimed photographer Taryn Simon. This is the first exhibition of this new series of photographs.

Taryn Simon's photographs chronicle contradictory aspects of the American identity while exposing the veiled mechanisms of society. This latest work, *CONTRABAND*, expands on her earlier series, *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* (2007), that explored the covert intersection between private and public.

For five days in November 2009, Simon remained on site at John F. Kennedy International Airport, which processes more international passengers than any other airport in the United States. The exhaustive pace at which she photographed paralleled the twenty-four hour rhythm by which goods move across borders and time zones. *CONTRABAND* includes 1075 photographs of items detained or seized from passengers and express mail entering the U.S. from abroad.

Simon used a labor intensive, forensic photographic procedure to document a broad array of forbidden items including the active ingredient found in Botox, counterfeit clothes and accessories (including designer hand bags), heroin, jewelry, over-proof Jamaican rum, items made from endangered species, pharmaceuticals, Cuban cigars, animal parts, pirated DVDs, gold dust, pistols, onions, GBL (a date rape drug concealed as house cleaner), casher checkes, and illegal steroids.

In cataloguing an enormous amount of material in a limited amount of time, emerging patterns reveal a comprehensive cross-section of international commerce, exposing the desires and demands that drive the international economy as well as the local economies that produce them.

Simon 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. Contraband can also infer danger, and raises questions about what is officially considered to be a threat to authority and security in contemporary American society.

This exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by Steidl with a text by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Director of the Serpentine Gallery, London.

TARYN SIMON

Taryn Simon was born in New York in 1975. Her most recent work, An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar, reveals that which is integral to America's foundation, mythology and daily functioning, but remains inaccessible or unknown to a public audience. Her earlier work, The Innocents (Discovery Prize 2010), documents cases of wrongful conviction in the United States and investigates photography's role in that process. Simon's photographs have been exhibited nationally and internationally, including solo shows at: Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum Fur Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; and Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin. Permanent collections include: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum Fur Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; and Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. She is a graduate of Brown University and a Guggenheim Fellow. Simon has been a visiting artist at Yale University, Bard College, Harvard University and Columbia University. Her photography and writing have been featured in numerous publications and broadcasts including The New York Times Magazine, The New Yorker, Ted.com, CNN, BBC and Frontline. Steidl recently published An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar and Simon's book Contraband was released in September 2010 and opened at the Lever House in New York. Additionally, Simon is currently working on a global project which will be exhibited and published in Spring, 2011 at the Tate Modern, London and the Neue Nationale Galerie, Berlin. Simon will be exhibiting works at the Venice Biennale 2011. Simon is represented by Almine Rech Gallery