

**GAA
GALLERY**



CUBA, 1961 (attempted)



LAOS, 1960



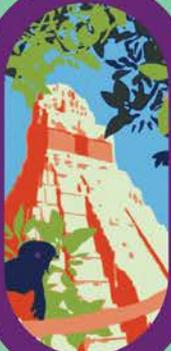
IRAN, 1953

JOHANNAH HERR

How to Hide an Empire



GUYANA, 1964



GUATEMALA, 1954

HOW TO HIDE AN EMPIRE

JOHANNAH HERR

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 an 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.

Exhibition

November 12, 2022 - January 7, 2023

Antwerpener Str 4, 50672 Cologne

Opening

November 12, 2022, 3 - 7 pm

For more information please contact info@gaa-gallery.com



This rug references the history of The Phoenix Program, the CIA's program of torture and assassinations against Vietnamese civilians who they suspected were part of the VietCong Infrastructure (VCI)--the civilian population who formed a network of informants to support the VietCong. The torture techniques developed during this program would be used extensively in later wars (particularly the War on Terror) even though their efficacy as an intelligence-gaining tools was proven to be ineffective (detainees would often give false information under the duress of torture simply to make the torture cease).

Iconography includes: map of Vietnam, the Chien dich Phung Hoàng (Phoenix Program) and CIA logos, US currency, alarm clock, light bulb and loudspeakers.

American War Rug XVIII (Phoenix Program)

2022

Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
155 x 84 cm | 61 x 33 in





Detail | *American War Rug XV (Operation Paper)*, 2022



This rug references the history of the CIA's secret proxy war in Laos (1964-1973) during which the US dropped more than 270 million cluster bombs on the the country (more than all of the bombs dropped in WWII combined). Due to Laos's dense jungle foliage many of these bombs failed to detonate and to this day over 80 million munitions have yet to be cleared from the land, resulting in count-less injuries, deaths and loss of limbs.

Iconography includes: map of Laos, clus-ter bombs, AK47 and M16 rifles, bullets, CIA logos, B52 Bombers, Hmong Hill Tribe pattering, prosthetic limbs, and broken military medals; Purple Heart, Vietnam Service, Republic of Vietnam Campaign, and National Defense Service Medals.

American War Rug XI (Secret War In Laos)

2022

Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
160 x 84 cm | 63 x 33 in

Detail | *American War Rug XI (Secret War In Laos)*, 2022



This rug references the history of US Nuclear testing on the Marshall Islands. Beginning with Operation Crossroads the US forcibly displaced Marshallese to conduct nuclear testing. Over the course of 12 years, the United States conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands: 23 at Bikini Atoll and 44 near Enewetak Atoll, but fallout spread throughout the Marshall Islands, resulting in the contamination of land and water on many of the atolls, and high cancer rates throughout the Marshallese population.

Iconography includes: maps of Bikini and Enewatak Atolls, nuclear blast mushroom cloud, nuclear bombs, cancer cells, and the Japanese plutonium, the Runit Dome (known as a “nuclear coffin”).

American War Rug XVI (Marshall Islands, 1946-58), 2022

Tufted rug with acrylic and wool yarn
160 x 84 cm | 63 x 33 in



Detail | *American War Rug XVI (Marshall Islands, 1946-58)*, 2022





Detail | *American War Rug XVII (Hawaii, 1893) 1946-58*, 2022

This rug references the history of the 1954 CIA-backed coup in Guatemala. The coup was orchestrated in collusion with the United Fruit Company (later Chiquita Brands International) whose profits were threatened when President Jacobo Arbenz expropriated their land to landless peasants.

Iconography includes: Map of Guatemala, Chiquita (Formerly United Fruit) and CIA logos, AK47 and Mosin-Nagant rifles, bullets, Marxist literature, Radio Liberación radio tower, US currency, P-47 Thunderbolt planes.



American War Rug XIII (Guatemala, 1954)

2022

Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn

122 x 86.5 cm | 48 x 34 in

Detail | *American War Rug XIII (Guatemala, 1954)*, 2022





This rug references the history of the US-backed 1961 coup in the Congo and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. The CIA colluded with the Belgian Government to orchestrate this coup—for which Belgium formally apologized this past June.

Iconography includes: map of the Congo, Makasi Airforce (the CIA-orchestrated air force piloted by Cuban dissidents) and CIA logos, US currency, Belgian flag, poisoned toothpaste, Uranium ore, B-26 Marauder and T-28 Trojan planes, AK47 and FN 1889/39 Belgian Congo Mauser rifles and bullets.

American War Rug XIV (Congo, 1961)

2022

Tufted rug using acrylic and wool yarn
122 x 86.5 cm | 48 x 34 in

Detail | *American War Rug XIV (Congo, 1961)*, 2022



This rug references the history of the 1953 CIA-backed coup in Iran. The coup was a joint effort with British intelligence (MI6) (code-named Operation AJAX and Operation Boot, respectively). These acts were sparked by Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh's nationalization of Iranian oil reserves which stripped the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (later BP) of their industry monopoly.

Iconography includes: Map of Iran, 1953 British Petroleum logo (formerly Anglo-Iranian Oil), CIA and MI6 logos, M1310 Mauser rifles, Radio Tehran radio tower, oil rig and oil drops, crescent moon and star, protest signs with Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, newspaper, US currency, tanks, tulip (a symbol of martyrdom).



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

EDUCATION

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

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
- Power Lunch*, Spring Break Art Show, New York, NY
- Banana Republics, Smallbany, Albany, NY
- I Have Seen the Future*, Field Projects, New York, NY
- 2021 *Above The Fruited Plain (America! America!)*, Geary Contemporary for NADA House, New York, NY
- 2020 *Domestic Terrorism: War Rugs from America*, Elijah Wheat Showroom, Newburgh, NY
- Johannah Herr - New Works*, Geary Contemporary for Untitled Art Fair, San Francisco, CA
- 2019 *Redaction Order*, Geary Contemporary, New York, NY
- 2018 *Your Comfort is Attended by Permanent Violence*, Bric Art FP, Brooklyn, NY
- Patenting Distraction*, Elijah Wheat Showroom, Brooklyn, NY
- 2017 Moll Madnoss, with Joseph Kraska, Elijah Wheat Showroom, Brooklyn, NY

- 2014 *Eat With Both Mouths*, Galeri Metropol, Tallinn, Estonia
- Harlem/Haarlem*, Chashama Windowspace Program, New York, NY
- 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
- 2020 *Flat Files OyG: 2020*, Ortega Y Gasset, Brooklyn, NY
- 2019 *Summer Exhibition*, Wassiac Project, Wassaic, NY
- 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
- Oh What a World*, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ
- 2017 *Suspended States*, Tesselate, Pontiac, MI
- Re:Re:Re:Re:Re:*, RE:ARTSHOW, Brooklyn, NY
- Collider 8*, Emily Davis Gallery, University of Akron, Akron, OH
- 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, Trebisonda, Italy
- The Real Real Spectacle*, Cave, Detroit, MI
- 2015 *Flux*, Sculpture X Symposium, Forum Gallery, Bloomfield Hills, MI
- Innbakaður Fiskur*, SÍM Gallery, Reykjavik, Iceland

- 2015 / \ , Forum Gallery, Bloomfield Hills, MI
- 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
- Parsons Alumni Exhibition*, Sheila Johnson Gallery, New York, NY
- The Collective Show*, Neter, Mexico City, Mexico
- Temporary-Protected Spaces*, Water Tower Art Festival, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Drafted, Schema Projects, Brooklyn, NY
- 2011 *Art on the Farm*, Collaborative Concepts on Saunders Farm, Garrison, NY
- Post*, Affordable Art Fair - Booth A11, New York, NY
- 2010 *A Liminal State*, Art in Bushwick's Beta Spaces, 56 Bogart, Brooklyn, NY
- Bittersweet: The Chocolate Show*, Paul Robeson Gallery, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ
- Magicality*, Platform Gallery, Seattle, WA
- Figment Art Festival, Governors Island, NY
- Works on Paper*, Big & Small / Casual Gallery, Long Island City, NY
- Heed the Machine*, Illustrious, St. Cecelia Convent, Brooklyn, NY
- Youth Cult*, Dadapost, Berlin, Germany
- Artists For: Haiti*, Envoy Enterprises, New York, NY
- 2009 *Beatus Abjectus*, Space Womb, Long Island City, NY
- Gruntwork*, 31 Ebertystrasse, Berlin, Germany
- Windows Brooklyn*, Rapisarda, Brooklyn, NY
- I Love Everything*, Envoy Enterprises, New York, NY

PUBLIC ART COMISSIONS

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

SELECTED, AWARDS, GRANTS, + FELLOWSHIPS

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

SELECTED PRESS + PUBLICATIONS

- 2022 "What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now" by Jillian Steinhauer, New York Times.

SELECTED PRESS + PUBLICATIONS CONT'D

- 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
- Davidson College, Davidson, NC

Johannah Herr (b. 1987, Reading, PA, USA) 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.