

Military Veterans and Trauma Survivors Honored at The Army and Navy Club

Saturday, February 16, 2019 @ 11:00 AM

@ The Army and Navy Club

Artist **Susan J. Barron** is bringing her acclaimed portrait series, *Depicting the Invisible: A Portrait Series of Veterans Suffering from PTSD*, to The Army and Navy Club on Farragut Square in Washington DC, from February 16 through April 13, 2019.

The members-only Army and Navy Club will open its doors to the public on Saturdays (except March 2) from 11am to 2pm throughout the duration of the exhibition. The Club's dress code requires a coat and tie for men and comparable attire for women.

A private exhibition opening for members and guests will be held at the Club on February 15, from 6:30 pm to 8 pm, featuring a live conversation with the artist and author Charles W. "Chuck" Newhall III. Newhall is the author of *"Fearful Odds, A Memoir of Vietnam and Its Aftermath,"* and is the most recent veteran to sit for a portrait with Barron.

Depicting the Invisible features fifteen American military veterans who have survived the trauma of war and are living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Barron's oversized black-and-white photographic portraits are hand-painted with the subjects' stories in their own words. Staring into the camera, these veterans display both their strength and vulnerability. The elegance of the images is juxtaposed with the brutality of the narratives, revealing complex layers of meaning.

“The Army and Navy Club is proud to host ‘Depicting the Invisible,’” says General John Altenburg, Chairman of The Army and Navy Club Library Trust. “Susan’s work captures the PTSD epidemic through a deeply intimate lens, instilling her veteran subjects with dignity while building empathy in all who see her work. This important exhibition brings much-needed awareness to the triumphs and challenges facing our combat veterans today; it is my hope that all who see this show will be inspired to make a difference in the veteran community.”

Barron’s intent is to illuminate the veteran’s experiences and to initiate a conversation around the sensitive issue of PTSD. “Twenty-two veterans commit suicide every day in our country,” says Barron. “The invisible wounds of war are just as devastating as the visible ones. My mission is to bring awareness to the PTSD epidemic and to provide a platform for veterans to share their stories.”

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The Veteran Experience

One work depicts Corporal Butler with his dog as he recounts the horrors of war: “When I got back from Iraq, I’d have this one recurring nightmare—I had to watch my buddy die.” Butler was united with his service dog after his second suicide attempt. In another work, Sergeant Carter sits in a wheelchair and reflects: “I’m paralyzed from the neck down for the rest of my life. I spent 16 months in a VA hospital, and I saw that it could be so much worse.” In the portrait of Sergeant Trotter the story of her rape by a fellow soldier confronts the intersection of military sexual assault and the #MeToo movement.

Also on view, A Table for the Fallen is an interactive work, where individual visitors are invited to sit at a table for one and to create a personal tribute to a fallen soldier whom they wish to honor. A discreetly arranged camera will record each guest's experience, and Barron will use the footage to compose a video work.

An art book of the portrait series has been published. The proceeds from the book's first edition will go to Freedom Fighters Outdoors (FFO), an organization that supports veterans in their struggles with PTSD. Signed copies of the book will be available for sale at the opening reception.