

# Military Veterans and Trauma Survivors Honored

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Portraits of veterans and trauma survivors > **Susan J. Barron's** oversized black-and-white photos are painted with the subjects' stories in their own words.

Thirteen military veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have shared their stories with New York-based artist Susan J. Barron. Barron created large-scale mixed-media portraits of the veterans that she will present in her new solo show, "Depicting the Invisible," at HG Contemporary.

From the organizers:

A private gallery reception for the participating veterans will take place on Veterans Day, November 12. Barron will be selling a book of the portrait series — the proceeds from which will benefit organizations that support veterans' causes. The exhibition will also toast Services for the Underserved, an organization that supports veterans in their struggles with PTSD and mental health, and which has graciously voiced their enthusiasm for this exhibition.

Barron's work shines a spotlight on 13 American veterans who have survived the trauma of war or terrorism. The artist's oversized black-and-white photographic portraits are painted with the subjects' stories in their own words.

The elegance of the images contrasts with the brutality of the narratives depicted. As they stare unflinchingly at the camera, the subjects are both vulnerable and headstrong. One work depicts Corporal Burke 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." He notes that he 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 star soldier captures the intersection of military sexual assault and the #MeToo movement.

Barron's intent is not to deify the veterans but to illuminate their 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."

In an interactive work, "A Table for the Fallen," 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. Each participant will be filmed ultimately composing a video piece.

"Depicting the Invisible" is on view at [HG Contemporary \(New York, New York\)](#) November 9–26, 2018.