

# Recent and Current Activity of Artist Susan J. Barron



BY ADORA TROSTLE / DECEMBER 6, 2018



This post runs through a few recent activities of Artist [Susan J. Barron](#). First it covers a celebration for the opening of *Depicting the Invisible: A Portrait Series of Veterans Suffering from PTSD*. It then covers her show which opened today at Aqua Art Miami. It finishes with a short interview.

In honor of Veteran's Day 2018, artist Susan J. Barron hosted a series of private receptions for her new exhibition, *Depicting the Invisible: A Portrait Series of Veterans Suffering from PTSD*, which ran through November 26 at HG Contemporary gallery in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood.

Notable guests in attendance included actors Jack Mulcahy, Deborah Kuhn, ABC's FBI star Anthoula Katsimatides, Consuela Vanderbilt Costin, NYC International Film Festival Founders Roberto Rizzo and Caroline Johnson, Michele Peacock, and philanthropist Jean Shafiroff, in addition to HG Contemporary Gallery Owner Philippe Hoerle-Guggenheim and gallery director Della Tobias.



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The celebrations culminated in a book signing and dinner for the featured veterans, who traveled from around the country to attend the opening. Among the veterans present were Specialist Craig McNabb, Staff Sergeant Joshua Sandor, Specialist Dortrie (Bird) A. Jones Jr., Sergeant Russell Carter, Sergeant Mike Burke, and Specialist Ken Weinert.

The show features a collection of 6ft x 6ft mixed-media portraits on canvas, combining photographic imagery, paint, text, and collage. Each portrait is layered with the subjects' stories in their own words.

The exhibition toasts *Freedom Fighters Outdoors* and *Services for the Underserved*. The two organizations support veterans in their struggles with PTSD and mental health and have graciously voiced their enthusiasm for this exhibition.

Barron has shared her inspiration for the series: "When I learned the fact that 22 veterans commit suicide every day in this country, and the role that PTSD plays, I felt appalled and sad. I wanted to find a way to shine a light on this issue and to make a human connection with this situation so people don't just hear a statistic. I wanted to give all the veterans a voice, a platform to tell their stories—that was my mission for the show."

The artist is also selling an art book of the portrait series—the proceeds from which benefit *Freedom Fighters Outdoors*.

There is an interactive art piece on display at the gallery called "A Table For The Fallen." In a private room sits a dining table set for one, with rose petals covering the floor. Visitors are invited to sit and honor a soldier who has fallen, either on the battlefield or battling PTSD on the streets of their hometowns. These tributes are being recorded and ultimately edited to create a film of the same name. Many of the guests in attendance recorded tributes.

*Depicting the Invisible* opened to the public on Friday, November 9th and was on view through Monday, November 26<sup>th</sup> at HG Contemporary gallery (527 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, New York, NY 10011).

**ABOUT SUSAN J. BARRON:** Susan J. Barron is a nationally recognized and internationally collected artist. Her paintings, both figurative and politically motivated, have been shown in galleries from San Francisco to New York. Ms. Barron has had solo shows throughout the United States, including New York City's Caelum Gallery, the Kevin Butler Gallery in Massachusetts, the First Frontier Collage Society in Texas, and the Lark Creek Gallery in California. After a diverse career in advertising, marketing and branding, Ms. Barron founded The Pencil Promise in 2009 following a trip to Cambodia that changed her life. Witnessing firsthand the barriers to education that children in the third world face, she was inspired to create a company that would help make education available for children in need. With Ms. Barron as CEO, the company brought work programs and school supplies to Cambodia, Laos, Kenya, India, and Cuba through 2017. A graduate of Boston University, Ms. Barron studied art at the Art Institute of San Francisco and Yale School for the Arts.

**ABOUT HG CONTEMPORARY:** HG Contemporary is a breakthrough gallery founded by Philippe Hoerle-Guggenheim in 2014. The gallery has built a reputation for unearthing distinct artists and producing shows that embrace groundbreaking aesthetics and concepts. The gallery is committed to developing an international contemporary program that is ambitious as well as diverse. The gallery's locations include Chelsea New York, Williamsburg, Napa Valley, and Madrid. This commitment carries with it an innovative and clear vision about producing exceptional art exhibitions as well as a deep understanding of visual culture's function within and beyond the walls of the gallery. HG Contemporary has produced exhibitions featuring: RETNA, Tim Bengel, Stuart McAlpine Miller, Jason Dussault, Massimo Agostinelli, Olga Tobreluts among many others.

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Susan J. Barron Presents Portraits of Military Veterans and Trauma Survivors at Aqua Art Miami

(Miami, FL – October 30, 2018) – New York City-based artist Susan J. Barron will present a selection of the works from her new series, *Depicting the Invisible: A Portrait Series of Veterans Suffering from PTSD*, at HG Contemporary's booth at the seventh edition of Aqua Art Miami (December 5-9, 2018).

The series is composed of 14 mixed-media portraits at 6 feet by 6 feet that feature military veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD.) The portraits, a combination of photography, paint and text, are layered with the veterans' 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 powerful.

These works are about making a human connection. One work depicts Corporal Derek 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." He notes that he was united with his service dog after his second suicide attempt.

In the portrait of Sergeant Renoula Trotter the story of her rape by a star soldier captures the intersection of military sexual assault and the #MeToo movement.

Barron uses art to as a medium to affect social change. 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."

A book of the portrait series, "Depicting the Invisible" has been published and will be available for sale. All proceeds will go to FFO, an amazing organization helping veterans with PTSD.

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Here is an interview I gave Susan

1. How do the reactions to your work on veterans vary from someone who directly relates to PTSD and someone who does not?

*A veteran suffering from PTSD came to my show "Depicting the Invisible" at HG Contemporary gallery in New York City. He walked around for quite a while taking in the portraits. Then he walked up to me and he said "These are all paintings of me."*

*On the other hand, several visitors to the gallery told me they had heard of PTSD but had no idea that 22 veterans commit suicide every day and were so moved by these veterans' stories. They really wanted to help make a difference. They bought copies of the art book "Depicting the Invisible," all the proceeds from which go to Freedom Fighters Outdoors, an amazing organization that works with veterans suffering from PTSD.*

2. How did you become interested and involved with veterans and PTSD?

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*I met some women who had lost their husbands to PTSD. I was stunned and saddened to learn that 22 veterans commit suicide every day in our country and I wanted to use my art to shine a light on this epidemic and to give veterans a voice to tell their stories. I believe art can be a catalyst for social change.*

3. How many veterans use the community services offered to them (such as the VA or other veteran groups)? Is this work meant to be more for them or the public?

*In my experience veterans tell me PTSD is something that they live with every day. Veterans tell me organizations like FFO have changed their lives. Many veterans don't seek help because they don't want to be weak. They don't want to be the broken soldier. The invisible wounds of war are just as devastating as the visible ones. No one feels weak asking for medical help for a broken leg or missing limb. We need to erase that stigma and let veterans know that asking for help for PTSD is not weak.*

4. Does your recent show at HG Contemporary relate to your exhibit at Art Miami?

*Yes. HG Contemporary has brought 6 paintings from the "Depicting the Invisible" portrait series to AQUA Art Miami. My mission is to travel the show around the country to amplify these veterans' voices and to bring greater awareness to this issue. I believe this is a national story but also a local story.*

5. Do you have a favorite city to exhibit in?

*Every city is special and meaningful. I'm thrilled to be here in Miami at Aqua Art Miami. The energy in Miami is so incredible surrounding Miami Art Week, and I am so excited to be a part of it all. I am looking forward to bringing the show to Washington DC in February 2019. The admirals, and generals, and senators making decisions about our men and women in uniform should bear witness to the stories told in "Depicting the Invisible."*

6. How often do you change the issue you are addressing in your work?

*My mission is to focus on "Depicting the invisible." One of my veterans, Sergeant Michael Burke, said "if we don't talk about PTSD we can't save lives." I am continuing to add more veterans from around the country as the show travels.*

7. Is your education related company still operating? What was it called?

*In 2008 I traveled to Cambodia, a trip that changed my life. I witnessed the barriers to education for children in the third world. In 2009, I started a company called the Pencil Promise. For every backpack we sold we delivered another filled with school supplies to a child in need making education possible. We made delivery trips to Laos, Cambodia, and India. We worked with three indigenous tribes in Kenya; the Kisi, the Samburu, and the Maasai. We made deliveries to Tibetan refugees in Dharamsala, and made deliveries to Cuba. I expanded the program by bringing it home to the US making deliveries to military bases. I closed the company in 2017.*



