

SIMON ROBERTS HOMELAND

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November 15 - January 12, 2019
Opening Reception: Thursday November 15, 6-8PM

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Simon Roberts in conversation with W. M. Hunt on Saturday November 17, 3.30PM

Flowers Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition by British photographer Simon Roberts, bringing together works from his extended photographic surveys of Russia and Britain produced over a period of 15 years.

Simon Roberts is known for his major bodies of work, *We English*, *Pierdom*, and *Merrie Albion*, which together comprise one of the most significant contemporary photographic studies of Britain since the new color documentary photography of the 1980s. His earlier series *Motherland* remains one of the most extensive, comprehensive photographic accounts of Russia by a Western photographer. Presented together in this exhibition, *Homeland* explores Roberts' critical reflection on the relationship between contemporary national identity and place, and his ongoing investigation of what draws people together within a particular landscape.

Between 2004 and 2005 Roberts traveled to more than 200 locations across Russia to produce the book *Motherland* (2007), an exploration of the relationship between landscape and Russian identity. His photographic studies explored ideas of Russia's 'modest beauty'¹ and presented a diverse view of the vast country, encapsulating the optimism and national pride derived from the Russian sense of place.

On his return to Britain, Roberts began to examine the British relationship to the idea of homeland, which he came to define as a sense of longing sustained by "a range of archetypal images held in the mind". The resulting photographs, which were produced over a decade (2007-2017), adopt a historical, rather than fleeting, gaze. Exploring social practices and customs linked to the British landscape, as well as some of the economic and political theater that has helped define recent history, his large-scale photographs reflect on the nature of shared histories and communal experiences.

Critically conflating the traditional genre of landscape with social documentary, Roberts typically positions the camera at a deliberate distance and elevation from the most obvious scenic viewpoint, focusing instead on the sidelines or peripheral spaces, rewarding the viewer's closer scrutiny of the scene with subtle actions and gestures taking place off-center. Paradoxically theatrical and ordinary, Roberts' images reach beyond the news headlines relating to 'how we are' in our present societies and excavate the breadth of diverse individual experience making up a national identity.



Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Shoreham Air Show, West Sussex, from *Merrie Albion* (2007-2017); Camping with Sasha and Paval, Kamchatka, Far East Russia, from *Motherland* (2004-2005).

For further information and images please contact Brent Beamon, brent@flowersgallery.com or +1 212 439 1700.



Left to right: Victory Day picnic, Yekaterinburg, West-Central Russia, from *Motherland* (2004-2005); Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station, Nottinghamshire, from *We English* (2007-2008); *Untitled 3*, Murmansk, Northern Russia, from *Polyarnye Nochi* (2005); Broadstairs Dickens Festival, Isle of Thanet from *Merrie Albion* (2007-2017).

ABOUT SIMON ROBERTS

Simon Roberts (b.1974) is based in Brighton, UK. He has exhibited widely with solo shows at the National Media Museum in Bradford (UK), the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma (Italy), and the Multimedia Art Museum in Moscow (Russia) amongst others; and his work has been included in exhibitions at Aperture (New York); Corcoran Gallery of Art (Washington, DC); The Photographers' Gallery (London, UK); Museum of Contemporary Art (Shanghai, China); and Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago). His work is in major collections including the George Eastman Museum, the Art Collection Deutsche Börse, and the V&A. In 2010 he was commissioned as the official British Election Artist by the House of Commons Works of Art Committee to produce a record of the General Election on behalf of the UK Parliamentary Art Collection; and in 2013 was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society. His books include *Motherland* (Chris Boot, 2007), *We English* (Chris Boot, 2009), *Pierdom* (Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2013), and *Merrie Albion - Landscape Studies of a Small Island* (Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2017).

All images (c) Simon Roberts, courtesy of Flowers Gallery London and New York.
Exhibition opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10am - 6pm.

1. 'Modest beauty' is a term used by Christopher Ely in his book *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia*, DeKalb, IL, Northern Illinois University Press, 2002.

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