

Sally Mann

(b. Lexington, Virginia, 1951)

Sally Mann has always remained close to her roots. She has photographed in the American South since the 1970s, producing series on portraiture, architecture, landscape and still life. She is perhaps best known for her evocative and resonant landscape work in the American South and for her intimate portraits of her family, her young children and her husband. Her work has attracted controversy at times, but it has always been influential, and since her the time of her first solo exhibition, at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., in 1977, she has attracted a wide audience.

Sally Mann explored various genres as she was maturing in the 1970s, but she truly found her métier with her second publication, a study of girlhood entitled *At Twelve: Portraits of Young Women* (Aperture, 1988). Between 1984 and 1994, she worked on the series, *Immediate Family* (Aperture, 1992), which focuses on her three children, who were then all aged under twelve. While the series touches on ordinary moments in their daily lives – playing, sleeping, and eating – it also speaks to larger themes such as death and cultural perceptions of childhood. In her most recent family series, *Proud Flesh*, (Aperture, 2009) taken over a six-year interval, Mann turns the camera onto her husband, Larry, who is suffering from late-onset Muscular Dystrophy. The results of this rare reversal of photographic roles are candid, extraordinarily wrenching and touchingly frank portraits of a man at his most vulnerable moment.

Mann has produced two major series of landscapes: *Deep South* (Bullfinch Press, 2005) and *Mother Land*. In *What Remains* (Bullfinch Press, 2003), she assembled a five-part study of mortality, which ranges from pictures of the decomposing body of her greyhound, to the bodies at the Forensic study facility commonly known as The Body farm. Turning toward the landscape of death, she includes a meditation on the site where an armed fugitive committed suicide on her property segueing into a series of stirring, brooding images of the battlefields of the American Civil war.

While Mann has experimented with color photography, she has remained most interested in black and white, especially photography's antique technology. She has long used an 8x10 bellows camera, and has explored platinum and bromoil printing processes. In the mid 1990s she began using the wet plate collodion process to produce pictures that almost seem like hybrids of photography, painting, and sculpture. Many of these

processes were used in her 2016 show, *Remembered Light: Cy Twombly in Lexington*.

Sally Mann lives and works in Lexington, Virginia. A Guggenheim fellow, and a three-times recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, Mann was named “America’s Best Photographer” by *Time* magazine in 2001. In May 2011, she served as prestigious speaker at Harvard University for the William E. Massey, Sr. Lecture in the History of American Civilization with a series entitled, “If Memory Serves.”

She expanded the Massey lectures into a New York Times bestseller, *Hold Still* (Little, Brown, 2015), which received universal critical acclaim, and was named a finalist for the National Book Award. In 2016 *Hold Still* won the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction.

She has been the subject of two documentaries: *Blood Ties* (1994), which was nominated for an Academy Award, and *What Remains* (2007) which premiered at Sundance and was nominated for an Emmy for Best Documentary in 2008.

Mann has been the subject of major exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C and the Virginia Museum of Art, Richmond, VA. Her photographs can be found in many public and private collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

In 2018 *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings* premiered at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., the first major survey to investigate how Mann’s relationship with her native land—a place rich in literary and artistic traditions but troubled by history—has shaped her work. The exhibition will travel internationally and is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog, presenting an in-depth exploration of the evolution of Mann’s art, and a short film highlighting her technical process.

*A Thousand Crossings* brings together 115 photographs, many exhibited for the first time, which explore the overarching themes of existence: memory, desire, death, the bonds of family, and nature’s magisterial indifference to human endeavor. What unites this broad body of work—figure studies, landscapes, and architectural views—is that it is all bred of a place, the American South. Using her deep love of her homeland and her knowledge of its historically fraught heritage, Mann asks powerful, provocative questions—about history, identity, race, and religion—that reverberate across geographic and national boundaries.