



*Requiem NN*

February 13 - March 20, 2021

Josee Bienvenu gallery is pleased to announce *Requiem NN* by Juan Manuel Echavarría. The exhibition coincides with the installation of *Requiem NN* at the Tate Modern in London, where it will be on view for one year in the Artist and Society wing. "This wing is concerned with the ways in which artists engage with social ideals and historical realities. Whether through traditional media or moving images, abstraction or figuration, militancy or detached observation, all the artworks in this wing highlight aspects of the social reality in which they were made, and try to generate a reaction and convey a more or less explicit message to their publics" (Tate Modern). *Requiem NN* is on long-term loan from Tate Americas Foundation, courtesy of the Latin American Acquisitions Committee 2020.

For the past two decades, Juan Manuel Echavarría's work addresses the dread and human tragedy of the endless drug war in Colombia. In 2006, after his first visit to Puerto Barrio, Echavarría set up the foundation Puntos de Encuentro to give scholarships to students from rural areas, invisible victims of the drug war. Through 2013, he has taken multiple journeys to document a cemetery in Puerto Berrío, a town on the banks of the Magdalena River. Within the cemetery, a particularly colorful mausoleum stands apart from the others. The tombs are marked with the letters NN: Ningún Nombre—No Name.

The people of Puerto Barrio, save the nameless bodies from the waters of the Magdalena and bury them in the cemetery. Then they perform a second ritual. A NN can be "escogido"—chosen—by someone who agrees to take care of their tomb, to pray for their soul, in exchange for favors from the dead. The blessed one adopts the NN, decorates the tomb with flowers and often a marble slate saying, "Thank you NN for the favor received." Some caretakers even name their NN, often granting them their own family name, inscribing their new name on the marble.

"On one level, the living make a business-like transaction with the dead: In return for a favor, I will keep up your tomb, decorate it, paint it, bring a glass of water so your soul will not be thirsty, bring you flowers, humanize you by giving you a name. But collectively they are saying, we won't let the violence erase you, we snatch you away from those who have made you disappear, we take care of you, we give you names. Their pact with the dead reconstructs the social fabric" (Juan Manuel Echavarría).

Echavarría uses lenticular prints in order to capture two moments, months or years apart in each photograph. The sixty five photographs are installed in a grid arrangement, recreating the original structure of the NN mausoleum.

Born in Medellín, Colombia in 1947, Juan Manuel Echavarría lives and works in New York and Bogotá. His work has been exhibited extensively throughout Latin America, Europe, and the United States. In 2017-2018, an expansive 20-year career survey exhibition was on view at MAMBO Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, CO. A 200-page monograph was published by Toluca Editions on this occasion. Select exhibitions include: Centro Cultural Salmons, Universidad de Caldas, Manizales, CO (2018); Hemeroteca Nacional Universitaria Carlos Lleras Restrepo, Bogotá, CO (2016); Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, (2013-2014), traveling to Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico (2014); Musée du quai Branly, Paris, France (2013 – 2014), Kunstmuseum Bochum, Bochum, Germany (2014); Casa Daros, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2013); Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2013); Museo de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia (2013 - 2015), 18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2012); Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia (2012); Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico, D.F., Mexico (2012); Phoenix Art Museum, AZ (2012); Bienal Do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2011); Media Art Sammlung Goetz, ZKM; Museum of Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, Germany (2010); Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris, (2006); Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2005).