



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photographer Gillian Laub Explores America's Political Divisions Through the Lens of Her Own Family Dynamics in *Gillian Laub: Family Matters*



Gillian Laub, *Grandpa helping Grandma out*, 1999. © Gillian Laub

On View

September 24, 2021–January 10, 2022

Location

79 Essex Street, New York, NY 10002

NEW YORK, NY (JULY 21, 2021) — A new exhibition this fall at the International Center of Photography (ICP) offers renowned New York-based photographer Gillian Laub's picture of an American family saga that feels both anguished and hopeful. On view September 24, 2021 through January 10, 2022, *Gillian Laub: Family Matters* balances empathy with critical perspective, humor with horror, the closeness of family with the distance of the artist. The

exhibition is curated by David Company, ICP's Managing Director of Programs, and coincides with the publication of a companion book by Aperture. Presented in the museum's new building at 79 Essex Street in New York, which opened in January 2020, the fall/winter season at ICP also will feature the exhibitions *Diana Markosian: Santa Barbara* and *INWARD: Reflections on Interiority*.

For the last two decades, Gillian Laub's photography has tackled timely topics with a careful focus on community and human rights. Her work has spanned terror survivors in the Middle East (*Testimony*, 2007) to racism in the American south (*Southern Rites*, 2015), using her camera to investigate how society's most complex questions are often writ large in our most intimate relationships and spaces—including her own. She has been simultaneously, and privately, documenting the emotional, psychological, and political landscape of her own family—exploring her growing discomfort with the many extravagances that marked their lives. Intense intergenerational bonds have shaped and nurtured Laub but have also been fraught. As it moves through time, the exhibition becomes a microcosm of a deeply conflicted nation, as the artist and her parents find themselves on opposing sides of a sharp political divide—tearing at multigenerational family ties, and forcing everyone to ask what, in the end, really binds them together.

“Photography is an ideal medium for mixed feelings and ambiguities,” said David Company. “In the two decades it has taken Gillian Laub to tell the story of her family, she has walked the finest of lines between humor and anguish, empathy and tension, irony, and sincerity. There are no easy answers here, just the honest narration of a complicated life.”

“This project is an exploration of the conflicted feelings I have about where I come from—which includes people I love and treasure, but with whom, most recently in a divided America, I have also struggled mightily,” said Gillian Laub. “It is made with the intention to accept as well as to challenge—both them and myself.”

The exhibition is organized into four acts, with more than 60 images dating from 1999-2020. In Act I, Laub captures family events—holidays, bar mitzvahs, weddings, poolside barbecues, and vacations—such as her father carving the Thanksgiving turkey, or her grandparents and great aunt embarking on a dressy night on the town. Act II shows how Laub begins to form her own family through marriage and children as she loses relatives from the older generation. Images document Laub's wedding arrangements, including wedding dress shopping and multiple family meetings with an imperious wedding planner.

A shift comes in Act III, as Laub's parents and other relatives enthusiastically support Donald Trump, while Laub is staunchly opposed, leading to heated political debates and exposing family fault lines. Images depict Laub's nephew wearing a Trump rubber mask, and her father proudly wearing a red “Make America Great Again” cap while golfing, as he encourages her to “learn to be less judgmental and more tolerant.”

Act IV documents the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, racial violence, and an election—

momentous world events that continue to divide the family, but also help to bring it back together. Laub's parents drive for hours to deliver a cake and balloons to celebrate Laub's quarantine birthday, peering through the sliding glass door for safety, and relatives gather for a masked outdoor Thanksgiving dinner in November 2020.

Laub is a storyteller. In the book *Family Matters* (Aperture 2021), her photographs are accompanied by her own words. For this exhibition, much of the writing is presented as immersive sound, produced by ICP's audio guide partner Gesso, which is an integral part of the experience. Moving through the four sequential acts of *Family Matters*, visitors will hear the artist and her family in their own words: funny, poignant, troubled, and challenging.

Publication & Programming

A companion book, *Gillian Laub: Family Matters*, will be published by Aperture in September 2021. With more than eighty images, accompanied by a personal account of the artist's life in her own words, the book offers a compelling picture of the fractures in contemporary American society, in a subversively funny and gut-wrenchingly familiar way. 228 pages, 85 four-color images. Clothbound. ISBN 978-1-59711-491-2. US \$50.00 / CDN \$65.00 / UK £40.00.

ICP will host public programs related to this exhibition, including a book event and signing in collaboration with Aperture, to be announced.

Other Fall/Winter 2021 ICP Exhibitions

Diana Markosian: Santa Barbara presents the photographer's compelling autobiographical narrative of her mother's path from Russia to America with her two children in search of a better life. The exhibition juxtaposes an idealized, Hollywood-like version of the American dream with the often-startling reality of the immigrant experience. Curated by Sara Ickow, Manager of Exhibitions and Collections, and David Company, *Santa Barbara* features staged images, film footage, and family photographs that reimagine the past and explore themes of family and memory.

INWARD: Reflections on Interiority features newly commissioned work by five emerging artists—Djeneba Aduayom, Arielle Bobb-Willis, Quil Lemons, Brad Ogbonna, and Isaac West—who experiment with and explore aspects of their interior lives. Their work moves beyond the endless scope of the constructed selfie and documentation of events in the public realm to examine the intimate interactions and thoughts that make up their daily experiences as artists and people in a time of unprecedented change. The exhibition is curated by Isolde Brielmaier, PhD, Curator-at-Large at ICP.

About the Artist

Gillian Laub, @gigilaub

Gillian Laub (b. 1975) is a photographer and filmmaker based in New York. She received a B.A. in comparative literature from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, before studying photography at the International Center of Photography. Laub has spent the last two decades investigating political conflicts, exploring family relationships, and challenging assumptions

about cultural identity. Her works include the book *Testimony* (Aperture, 2007) and the book and HBO film *Southern Rites* (2015). Laub received a New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship in 2019. Her work is collected internationally and included in the public collections of the Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire; International Center of Photography, New York; Jewish Museum, New York; and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, among other institutions. She continues to contribute to many publications, including *The New York Times Magazine*, *TIME*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The New Yorker*. Laub is represented by Benrubi Gallery in New York.

Exhibition Access

Fall exhibition hours are Wednesday through Monday, 11 AM to 7 PM, and until 9 PM on Thursdays. Admission: Adults \$16; Seniors (62 and Over), Students (with Valid ID), Military, Visitors with Disabilities \$12 (caregivers are free); SNAP/EBT card holders \$3; ICP members, ICP students, and all visitors 16 years old and under are free.

Admission to ICP is by timed ticketed entry only to ensure that limited capacity and other safety standards are met. Tickets can be reserved online at icp.org/tickets. Visitors are asked to arrive during the 30-minute window of their timed ticket to help ensure a safe flow in the lobby. ICP is committed to offering space and programs that are accessible to all audiences. We believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion are values that are integral to offering an open forum for dialogue around photography and visual culture that is open to all. For more information about how we are welcoming you back safely, read our updated Visitor Information and Accessibility guidelines and policies.

Exhibition Support

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About the International Center of Photography

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world's leading institution dedicated to photography and visual culture. Cornell Capa founded ICP in 1974 to champion "concerned photography"—socially and politically minded images that can educate and change the world. Through our exhibitions, education programs, community outreach, and public programs, ICP offers an open forum for dialogue about the power of the image. Since its inception, ICP has presented more 700 exhibitions, provided thousands of classes, and hosted a wide variety of

public programs. ICP launched its new integrated center on Manhattan's Lower East Side in January 2020. Located at 79 Essex Street, ICP is the cultural anchor of Essex Crossing, one of the most highly anticipated and expansive mixed-use developments in New York City. ICP pays respect to the original stewards of this land, the Lenape people, and other indigenous communities. Visit icp.org to learn more about the museum and its programs.

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