

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mariana Cook *STONE WALLS*

September 6 – October 27, 2018

Opening reception Wednesday, September 5, 6-8pm

Deborah Bell Photographs is pleased to present its second exhibition of photographs by Mariana Cook. The exhibition will be on view in September and October, and will feature prints from Cook's stunning monograph, *Stone Walls: Personal Boundaries* (Damiani, 2011).

In her series *STONE WALLS*, Cook examines one of man's earliest and most enduring methods of defining territories: the stone wall. Sculptural and practical, majestic and humble, Cook's photographs of dry stone walls capture a fundamental relationship between human beings and the landscape.

STONE WALLS was conceived by Mariana Cook, the last protégé of Ansel Adams, at her home on Martha's Vineyard on the day before Thanksgiving 2002. After 56 cows strayed through a crumbling section of the stone wall she shares with her neighbor, Cook studied the tumbled wall and was struck by its beauty. With that inspiration, Cook spent the next eight years traveling to farms, towns, and temples in Peru, Great Britain, Ireland, the Mediterranean, New England, and Kentucky in pursuit of dry stone walls.

The striking black-and-white photographs on view portray the wall in landscape, the wall in abstract form, and the return of rocks to nature. Cook is fascinated with the juxtaposition of stones and geometric composition, as well as with the resonance among walls of different cultures. The walls were photographed by Cook between 2002 and 2010 and were built as early as 3600 B.C. Dry stone walls—those constructed without the use of mortar with stones skillfully selected and placed to ensure strength and durability—are slowly falling into disrepair or being removed from the landscape. Cook writes, "The walls collapse and are replaced by concrete blocks, wire or wooden fences. . . . The self-sufficient family life and closeness bred by the farm is disappearing with its walls."

Among the highlights in the exhibition is *Hagar Qim Temple, Malta, 2006*, which depicts one of the world's most ancient religious sites. The oldest dry stone structure on earth, it was built between 3600 and 3200 B.C. *Knobs, Hatun*

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Rumiyoq, Cusco, Peru, 2004, shows protrusions carved on 50-ton stones, which were used to drag and position them. (Curiously, every year at noon on the summer solstice, each knob casts a diagonal shadow which ends precisely at the adjacent stone's corner.) Also on view is Cook's photograph of a wall by the artist Andy Goldsworthy. *Jack's Fold (Andy Goldsworthy's Sheep Fold), Barbondale, Cumbria, England, 2006*, was built in 1996 as part of a series of sheep's folds. Goldsworthy worked only with existing folds or folds that had been destroyed but were indicated on old maps.

"I love being close to a wall, to stand in front of it for hours, composing an image from the rock's abstract shapes. It is a pleasure to work in the fresh air, listening to the sheep, cows, and birds. Sometimes, I am caught in the rain and freezing wind, and crouch down next to the wall to take shelter against it as the builders must have done. I feel safe right up against a wall, comforted by its containment of me, perhaps because the boundaries are so clear," Cook writes.

As Wendell Berry writes about stone walls in his essay in Cook's book, *Stone Walls: Personal Boundaries*, "They are products equally of art and nature. They look both human and natural." He concludes that the photographs are "a record of a kind of rural life by now almost lost, but certainly of worth and possibly indispensable."

Mariana Cook's photographs are included in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles; the National Gallery of Art and the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC; and the National Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, among other institutions. Her previous publications include the acclaimed portrait books *Fathers and Daughters, Mothers and Sons, Generations of Women, Couples, Faces of Science, Mathematicians, and Justice*; and *Close at Hand*. Cook's most recent book of photographs is *Lifeline* (Ivorypress, 2017, with an introduction by Jorie Graham).

**Gallery hours for the exhibition are Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-6pm.
High-res scans are available to the press. Please contact Deborah Bell
Photographs at 212-249-9400 for additional information, or at
info@deborahbellphotographs.com.**

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