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SOLDIER PORTRAITS Exhibition Opens January 30, 2009 at the Georgia Southern University Center for Art & Theatre

JANUARY 17, 2009



Soldier Portraits, an exhibition of photographs by Savannah artist Ellen Susan, will be on view at the Georgia Southern University Center for Art & Theatre in Statesboro, Ga. January 30 – March 12. The public is invited to attend all exhibition and gallery events free of charge.

The University's Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art will host an opening reception on Friday, Jan. 30th from 5-7 pm at the Center for Art & Theatre. Ellen Susan will speak about the exhibition and her creative process on Wednesday, Feb. 18th from 5-7 pm in the Visual Arts Building Auditorium at Georgia Southern University.

Susan uses the wet collodion process a photographic technique used in the 19th Century during the American Civil War to make portraits of contemporary American soldiers, many of whom have deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan for multiple tours of duty. The artist describes how she, 'wanted to produce physically enduring, visually arresting images of people sent repeatedly into war zones.' Many of the soldiers depicted are based in southeast Georgia.

One of her aims in photographing contemporary soldiers this way is to provide a counterpoint to anonymous media representations. The wet collodion process is slow and deliberate, requiring a large view camera and a darkroom onsite. The combination of the long exposures and the peculiarities of its appearance often elicit comments like "you can see into the subject's soul."

In contrast, much contemporary portrait work made with view cameras exhibits a neutral, deadpan appearance. While the slowness and formality of large-format photography can lend itself to emotional distance, the specific properties of the wet plate process eliminate even the potential for that kind of image. Susan explains, 'Personally, I think what the images reveal are simply lusciously rendered and highly detailed physical attributes of the individuals. I don't think you can see anybody's soul in any photograph, but if the appearance is compelling enough, it lets you imagine that you can and then consider the face and the person it belongs to, and what they might be all about.'

More information about the *Soldier Portraits* project can be found at www.soldierportraits.com.

For more information on this exhibition and other gallery programming provided by the Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art, visit <http://class.georgiasouthern.edu/art>. Georgia Southern's Gallery

Programming is supported by Student Activity Fees; all events are free and open to the public. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Georgia Southern University will

honor reasonable requests for accommodations. The Center for Art & Theatre is open Monday through Friday from 9 – 5 and by appointment. Docent tours are welcome and available upon request by calling (912) GSU-ARTS (2787).

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University, offers more than 120 degree programs serving nearly 18,000 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. The University, one of Georgia's largest, is a top choice of Georgia's HOPE scholars and is recognized for its student-centered approach to education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu.