

## BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

May 15, 2019

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### WAR MEMORANDA:

*Photography, Walt Whitman, and Memorials*

by Binh Danh & Robert Schultz

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Featuring the Liljenquist Family Collection of the U.S. Library of Congress

Our great national poet's concerns during the Civil War apply with striking relevance in our own moment of war and dividedness. Whitman's humane example and his central trope—the leaves of grass as sign of democracy and renewal—rebuke directly the White Nationalists who marched in Charlottesville chanting “Blood and Soil.” For Whitman, American blood in American soil was not a tribal claim, and for him “the land entire” was the most fitting memorial to the war dead, “South or North, ours all”: “[T]he land entire [is] saturated, perfumed with their impalpable ashes' exhalation in Nature's chemistry distill'd, and shall be so forever, in every future grain of wheat and ear of corn, and every flower that grows, and every breath we draw . . .”

In *War Memoranda*, released in time for the May 31st bicentennial celebration of Whitman's birth, Binh Danh's photographs of Civil War memorial sites, using the nineteenth-century cyanotype process, evoke at once the past and present. And Robert Schultz's chlorophyll prints offer portraits of Whitman and Civil War soldiers embodied in the flesh of leaves, physically enacting the central metaphor of *Leaves of Grass*—especially when the leaf used has been plucked from a “witness tree” known to have stood on a battlefield during the war.

This book of art, poetry, and comment includes a generous selection of Whitman's poetry and prose, 51 photographs, and essays by poets David Lehman and Stanley Plumly and by scholars Barbara Bair (Library of Congress) and Molly Rogers (*author of Delia's Tears*). *War Memoranda*, published by the Taubman Museum of Art, is printed in a fine art edition limited to 500 copies and is available by direct order through the artists. For more information, visit the Kickstarter page that was used for advance orders <http://kck.st/2DvOExn> or go to the book's Facebook page: *War Memoranda: Photography, Walt Whitman, and Memorials*.

*War Memoranda* is not an exhibition catalog, but it has grown out of the long and ongoing collaboration between Danh and Schultz that produced *War Memoranda: Photography, Walt Whitman, and Renewal*, the word and image exhibition first shown at the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke, Virginia and traveling now to museum venues along the East Coast.

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