

08.09 — 06.11.2022

***THE CANARY  
AND THE  
HAMMER***

**LISA  
BARNARD**

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## **LISA BARNARD** ***THE CANARY AND THE HAMMER***

### **Press release**

The Centre de la photographie Genève presents the first exhibition in Switzerland of British visual artist Lisa Barnard. It will be the first comprehensive presentation of her most recent major project.

Photographed across four years and four continents, *The Canary and The Hammer* details our multifaceted reverence for gold and its role in humanity's ruthless pursuit of progress. Prompted by the financial crisis of 2008 and its stark reminder of the global west's determination to accumulate wealth, Lisa Barnard sets out to question gold's continued status as economic barometer amidst new intangible forms of technological high finance.

The title of the project refers to the historical use of canaries in mines to detect carbon monoxide. Similarly, gold, a safe haven asset in times of economic instability, usually rises in price in times of crisis and, like the canary, becomes an indicator of the extent of the crisis to come. The hammer is a tool capable of breaking down the structures in which it is embedded.

Gold is ubiquitous in modern life; the mineral is concealed at the heart of much of the technology we use and is, most fundamentally, a potent symbol of value, beauty, purity, greed and political power. *The Canary and The Hammer* strives to connect these disparate stories – from the mania of the gold rush and the brutal world of modern mining, which extends to extraterrestrial realms, to the sexual politics of the industry and gold's often dark but indispensable role at the heart of high-tech industry, or the considerable challenges created by the treatment of its waste.

By addressing these issues through photography, Lisa Barnard in turn raises the question of how her chosen medium can respond to such abstract events and concepts. Through a mix of images, text and archival material, this project provides a fascinating insight into the troubled history of gold and the complex ways it intersects with the global economy. The result is an ambitious project, one sketching a personal journey in which she ultimately tackles the complexity of material representation in these fragmented and troubling times.

## Short Biography

Lisa Barnard is a British artist, researcher and educator whose photographic practice focuses on real events that embrace a variety of strategies. Her projects utilise both traditional documentary techniques, such as photography, audio, video and text with more contemporary visual techniques and computational forms. Barnard connects her interest in aesthetics and current photographic debates around materiality to the political climate focusing on New Ecologies, New Technologies, Science and the Military Industrial Complex.

Barnard is an Associate Professor and Programme leader on the MA in Documentary Photography at The University of South Wales. As well as regularly exhibiting her projects, she has three monographs, two with GOST Books, *Chateau Despair* supported by the Arts Council and *Hyenas of the Battlefield*, and *Machines in the Garden* supported by the Albert Renger Patzsch Book Award. Her latest book, *The Canary and the Hammer*, was published by MACK in September 2019 and was funded by the Getty Images Prestige Grant.

**Opening : Wednesday 7 September 2022, 6 p.m.**

Talk with the artist : 7 September 2022, 5.15 p.m.

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Images : [www.swisstransfer.com](http://www.swisstransfer.com)

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