

## GAGOSIAN



### **Mass Moca breathes new life into Taryn Simon's mourning sculptures** *The Pipes were originally made for performances dealing with death and mourning but will now serve less specific purposes*

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*Pre-installation view of Taryn Simon, The Pipes (2016/2021) Will McLaughlin*

The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA) in North Adams has acquired *The Pipes* (2016-2021), a collection of 11 monolithic concrete sculptures by the multidisciplinary artist Taryn Simon.

They were originally made for her performance *An Occupation of Loss* at the Park Avenue Armory in New York in 2016, which investigated mourning customs and the “physical and structural markings of loss that mankind has practiced since Neanderthal times”, Simon told *The Art Newspaper* in a previous interview.

The sold-out 2016 performance featured “professional mourners” reciting grieving rituals from Kyrgyzstani hymns to Tamil oppari songs inside small rooms at the base of the sculptures, which were inspired by circular structures known as “towers of silence” in the Zoroastrian religion, or pits designed for human decomposition. The works were made in collaboration with the architecture firm OMA/Shohei Shigematsu and also imagined as visible “inverted wells”, according to Simon.



*Installation view of An Occupation of Loss by Taryn Simon at Park Avenue Armory (13-25 September 2016) © Naho Kubota*

But since the performance closed, Simon has “thought about how to recontextualise the work”, says the Mass MoCA curator Alexandra Foradas, who also worked with Simon on her exhibition *A Cold Hole: Assembled Audience* at the museum in 2018. While performances will still be held within the sculptures, which produce atmospheric and echoing sounds when activated, the programming will be “less tightly prescribed to a specific theme”, she adds.

The previous installation of the works encouraged visitors to enter the sculptures and produce their own sounds when performances were dark, but recorded mournings still subtly reverberated throughout the Wade Thompson Drill Hall. Installed in an open field at Mass MoCA, the works will now serve as a “place for sonic exploration, quiet, jubilation, stargazing or whatever people need from it after a tumultuous year”, Foradas says. The modular structures have also been shrunk from 48 ft-tall to around 22 ft.

A group of local musicians will perform inside the works when the installation opens to the public on 29 May, coinciding with the opening of a new long-term *Skyscape* installation by James Turrell housed within a colossal water tank on the museum campus.