CONVERSATIONS WITH A SHIPWRECK — DIGITAL EXHIBITION

An interactive exhibition presented by American-Scandinavian Foundation brings the Swedish warship Vasa to Scandinavia House Online

New York, NY—Beginning Thursday, March 4, Scandinavia House Online is proud to introduce the interactive digital exhibition Conversations with a Shipwreck with a haunting, multimedia meditation on the Swedish warship Vasa, created in word and image by ASF Fellows Joan Wickersham and Adam Davies. Through presentations of poems and large-format photographs, with short durational video and audio, this digital art and literary exhibition responds to the legendary warship — which sank only minutes into her maiden voyage — exploring themes of memory and oblivion, technological triumph and fiasco, permanence and impermanence, mortality and time. Available through www.scandinaviahouse.org, Conversations with a Shipwreck is a unique collaboration by two award-winning artists inspired by a mysterious vessel that was both destroyed and preserved by catastrophe. The exhibition will have a private press opening prior to the opening, to be announced closer to the date.

In this unique interactive platform available through June 5, viewers will have the opportunity to experience a series of video pairings between Davies’s photographs and Wickersham’s prose poems, while also exploring information about the Vasa ship’s history and video introductions to each artist. Wickersham’s pieces – both intimate and urgent — weave together Vasa’s story and the personal associations it ignites. Davies’s photographs, made using a large-format camera, present monumental and intricate evocations of the ship and her artifact, as well as related sites around Stockholm. Words and images play off each other, taking the viewer out of the present day into an ambiguous time — not literal or historical, but “other” in a way that expresses the protean nature of Vasa and her story — bringing viewers into the presence of an absence.

The exhibition also highlights the ASF Fellowships & Grants programs, which demonstrate the Foundation’s longstanding commitment to educational cultural exchange. ASF Fellow Joan Wickersham is a writer and National Book Award finalist whose work has been acclaimed for its emotional fierceness, structural innovation, and elegance of language; her memoir The Suicide Index has been described as “an extraordinary magical mystery tour of a book” (The Los Angeles Times) and her most recent book of fiction, The News from Spain, has been hailed as “an ode to heartbreak and regret” (The New York Times). ASF Fellow Adam Davies is an award-winning photographer whose large-format film photography explores architecture, social systems, and public spaces. Said David Tomkins, Writer/Editor of The Chinati Foundation, Marfa: “There’s an enigmatic quality to Davies’ images, and to the places they depict. The pictures bear a trace of something a bit uncanny because the places they depict are quietly but insistently someplace else—or at least the threshold to someplace else . . . maybe a little magical, maybe a little cursed.”

The launch of Conversations with a Shipwreck will be accompanied by a prerecorded conversation between Joan Wickersham and Adam Davies, moderated by Darcy Frey, Director of Creative Writing at Harvard University.

ABOUT THE VASA
The immense and elaborately ornamented warship Vasa, built to be the most fearsome military weapon of its time, was launched on August 10, 1628, and sank almost instantly, capsized by a small gust of wind that came down through a gap in the cliffs. For 300 years, the ship lay forgotten at the bottom of Stockholm harbor. In 1956, an independent scholar named Anders Franzén found the wreck using homemade grappling tools, and spearheaded a long and ultimately successful effort to raise the ship, restore it, and build a museum to house it, along with everything that had been salvaged, including the bones of the people who died in the wreck. Vasa is now permanently housed in the Vasa Museum on the island of Djurgården, Stockholm.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Joan Wickersham’s memoir *The Suicide Index* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) was a National Book Award finalist, and appeared on “best books of the year” lists including *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *New York Magazine*, *Salon*, and *The Week*. Her most recent book, *The News from Spain* (*Knopf*) was named one of the year’s best fiction picks by *National Public Radio*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Her fiction has appeared multiple times in *The Best American Short Stories* and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, as well as many other publications. For the past ten years, Joan has been a regular op-ed columnist for *The Boston Globe*. She has been awarded fellowships by the American Scandinavian Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, MacDowell, and Yaddo. Joan graduated from Yale with a degree in art history and has taught fiction and memoir at Harvard, Emerson, UMass Boston, and the Bennington Writing Seminars.

Adam Davies is a recipient of grants from the American-Scandinavian Foundation, the Vira Heinz Endowment, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and has attended residencies at Chinati Foundation, Creative Alliance, Fine Arts Work Center, and Yaddo. He has worked as a Lecturer & Media Specialist at the National Gallery of Art, Washington and taught at Carnegie Mellon, Catholic, Robert Morris, and Harvard Universities. In 2015, Adam was named as Outstanding Emerging Artist at the DC Mayor’s Arts Awards and was the recipient of the Clarence John Laughlin Award. Between 2016–19, he was an artist-in-residence at Creative Alliance in Baltimore where his 2018 exhibition featured collaborations with Los Angeles-based musician Alex Zhang Hungtai and Chicago-based percussionist Adam Rosenblatt. In 2019 he presented his project, *Reroutings*, at the Mid-Atlantic TED Talk in Washington, DC.

THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAM

The American-Scandinavian Foundation’s fellowships and grants programs demonstrate the Foundation’s long-standing commitment to educational and cultural exchange. For over 100 years ASF has given more than 7,500 fellowships and grants to Americans engaged in study, research or creative arts projects in the Nordic countries and to residents of the Nordic countries to pursue their work in the U.S. In 2020, 69 students, professionals and artists were awarded over $780,000 in support.

THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION

The American-Scandinavian Foundation (ASF) promotes firsthand exchange of intellectual and creative influence between the United States and the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. A publicly supported American nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, ASF has an extensive program of fellowships, grants, intern/trainee sponsorship, publishing, and cultural activities. Headquartered in New York City, ASF has members throughout the United States, and alumni and donors worldwide.

For more information: amscan.org

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE

Scandinavia House was created by the American-Scandinavian Foundation to promote the artistic and intellectual influence of the Nordic countries. As the leading center for Nordic culture in the United States, Scandinavia House offers enriching programs that illustrate and illuminate the culture and life of the Nordic countries. The diverse programs include exhibitions, film series, concerts and other performances, readings, lectures, language courses, and activities for kids and families.

For more information: scandinaviahouse.org | Facebook | Twitter @ScanHouse

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