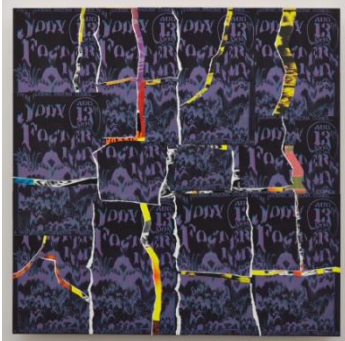


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GARY SIMMONS: *POST NO BILLS*



**15 JANUARY – 20 FEBRUARY 2016, LONDON
PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY, 14 JANUARY, 6 – 8 PM**

SATURDAY, 16 JANUARY, 12PM: GARY SIMMONS IN CONVERSATION WITH EKOW ESHUN, Simon Lee Gallery, London

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to present an exhibition of new paintings, wall work and sculptures by New York based artist Gary Simmons, in his third solo show at the gallery.

In his new body of work Simmons continues to excavate politics, music, race and class within American and British culture.

Drawing on the DIY aesthetic of punk, dub and early hip hop music and the tradition of street fly-posting to promote gigs and events, Simmons' rainbow saturated coloured paintings reveal traces of the long forgotten individual and collective creative voices that have informed and shaped contemporary culture.

An important analogue communication device in the 70's, 80's and early 90's, fly-posters, along with fanzines and mix-tapes, contributed to creating local scenes and regional cultures. Battles and protests were played out in poster form, plastered in the dead of night one on top of another, building a visual diary of a place and its people. Eventually ripped down or weather beaten, these hand-crafted, type-set promotional images, invitations and declarations became outdoor wallpaper, passed largely unnoticed each day.

Echoing the posters' lifecycle and the zeal and desire inherent in their original design and intention, Simmons builds up layer after layer of sections of found posters in his paintings; sourcing, cropping, re-colouring, re-printing, tearing and juxtaposing incongruous events and chronologies to invoke a familiar, dynamic language through a series of fragmented memories. These paintings, with their partially erased images, ghostly texts and disconnected symbols, remind us that we are constructed by personal experiences, fantasies, perceptions and external events. Simmons' paintings resist nostalgia yet reflect the process of history-making and our need to deconstruct, rework, reframe and to build upon what has been before. Whilst referencing marketing techniques that deftly seduce the viewer, Simmons renders any didactic message redundant, calling into question the speed and proliferation of mass marketing in a digital age and the commoditisation of youth cultures.

Incorporating low-fi and mass-produced materials in his work, Simmons reflects the vitality of individual and collective action for a common good. Mounted onto plywood surfaces, Simmons' paintings reference hoardings and construction sites, reminding us of the temporality of culture, its questionable accessibility and recalling the objecthood and impact of these aesthetic interventions in the public realm.

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A large 4m x 4m unique wall work in this series frames two new speaker sculptures, made from reclaimed wood found from buildings affected by hurricane Katrina, in The Treme area of New Orleans. Simmons was inspired by The Black Ark, the recording studio of reggae and dub producer Lee 'Scratch' Perry, built in 1973 in Kingston, Jamaica. Perry is infamous for his early adoption of effects and remixing, working with artists such as Bob Marley and the Wailers, Junior Murvin, Max Romeo and many others. His songs are layered with a variety of beats created from everyday objects and human expressions – from crying babies to rainfall and grinding broken glass. Perry referred to The Black Ark as a living thing, a life itself and Simmons was interested in “how he constructed an audio sound through an aesthetic gesture”.

Utilising the same DIY aesthetic and perched atop makeshift table-top plinths each of the sculptures stands alert, a unique character yet collectively ready for action, to command, move or sway a group, a community or to engage in a dialogue with one enthusiastic individual. A direct development from Simmons' performative sculpture *Recapturing Memories of the Black Ark*, (2014), these sculptures are part subject, part architectural model, part plaza.

An accompanying film of past *Recapturing Memories of the Black Ark* performances by Beans (New Orleans, 2014) and Ghostpoet (Basel, 2015) activate the sculptures and implicate the gallery and attending audience as a potential site for change.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Gary Simmons was born in 1964 and lives and works in New York. He graduated from the School of Visual Arts in New York with a BFA in 1988, and received an MFA at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California in 1990. His work has been exhibited widely in international biennales, museums and galleries worldwide, including most recently *All the World's Futures*, The 56th International Art Exhibition, Venice, Italy (2015); *Sharjah Biennial 12: The Past, the present, the possible*, Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE (2015); *Prospect.3: Notes for Now*, Prospect New Orleans, New Orleans, LA (2014); Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL (2014). Other major solo exhibitions include *Fight Night*, Metro Pictures, New York, NY (2014); *Focus: Gary Simmons*, Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX (2012); *1964*, The Bothen Foundation, New York, NY (2006); *Gary Simmons*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (2002); *Ghost House*, SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM (2002); *Desert Blizzard*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania, PA (2001). His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Studio Museum of Harlem, New York, NY; Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, MN; the Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; the Kunsthau Zürich, Zürich; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. His work is in major private and public collections including Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, NY; Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; The Rubell Collection, Miami, FL; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA and Jumex Collection, Mexico City, MX.

The current exhibition marks the artist's third solo show at Simon Lee Gallery, London. Previous exhibitions include *Shine* (8 April – 31 May 2011) and *House of Pain* (7 May – 9 June 2007).

SATURDAY, 16 JANUARY, 12PM: GARY SIMMONS IN CONVERSATION WITH EKOW ESHUN, Simon Lee Gallery, London. Please note this event is free to the public, but booking is advised: events@simonleegallery.com / 020 7491 0100.

Ekow Eshun is a writer and broadcaster. The former director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, he is Chair of the Fourth Plinth Commissioning Group, overseeing London's most significant public art project. He is a contributor to TV and radio shows including The Today programme, Saturday Review and Channel 4 News and his writing appears in publications including the Financial Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Observer, the New Statesman, Vogue and Wallpaper. His book, *Black Gold of the Sun*, was nominated for the Orwell Prize for political writing.

For further press information, images and interview requests please contact Julia Kelly-Kennedy: julia@simonleegallery.com / 020 7491 0100.

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