



**Pérez Art Museum Miami Presents**  
***Gary Simmons: Public Enemy***

***Simmons' Most In-Depth Presentation to Date Exposes Legacies of  
Race and Class in American Pop Culture***

**—Opening December 5, 2023—**



Gary Simmons. *Rogue Wave*, 2021. Oil and cold wax on canvas. 108 × 120 in. Spector/Trachtenberg Collection. © Gary Simmons.  
Photo: Jeff McLane.

(MIAMI, FL — August 3, 2023) — **Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM)** is pleased to present ***Gary Simmons: Public Enemy***, opening **December 5, 2023**. The exhibition, co-organized with the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, is the first comprehensive career survey of the richly layered work of Gary Simmons and features nearly 70 sculptures, paintings, photographs, works on paper, and installations, as well as a number of large-scale wall drawings the artist will create on-site.

Since the late 1980s, Simmons has played a key role in situating questions of race, class, and identity at the center of contemporary art discourse. Notable for his early application of appropriated pop-cultural imagery, Simmons' work aims to analyze and expose histories of racism in visual culture. Over the course of his career, Simmons has revealed traces of these histories in sports, cinema, literature, music, architecture, and urbanism, while drawing heavily on genres such as hip-hop, horror, and science fiction.

"We're proud to present the work of Gary Simmons, which encapsulates the essence of our nation's culture and history to urge us to explore the depth of our own stories. Simmons compels us to confront our shared past while embracing the possibilities of our collective future — serving as a powerful reminder that art has the remarkable ability to weave together important narratives of our time," said **PAMM Director Franklin Simmans**.

Organized in sections ranging from miseducation to erasure to recurrence, *Public Enemy* spans 30 years of the artist's highly disciplined production. Guided by an internal logic, Simmons' approach is cool, analytical, and unflinching in its interrogation of intense historical narratives, yet the results consistently deliver a strong emotional charge. The exhibition offers audiences a timely opportunity to gain a holistic understanding of the complex and profoundly moving work of this groundbreaking and influential artist.

Exhibition highlights include: *Lineup* (1993) in which eight pairs of gold-plated athletic sneakers sit neatly arrayed on a platform under a police wall chart lineup used to identify suspects' height; *Step into the Arena (The Essentialist Trap)* (1994), a boxing ring with a chalkboard drawing on the floor demonstrating the footwork for the Cakewalk dance and tap shoes dangling from the ropes, referencing the ways in which African American men have been exploited for entertainment in sports, the performing arts, and cinema; and *Recapturing Memories of the Black Ark* (2014-ongoing), an interactive sculptural installation inspired by Lee "Scratch" Perry's Black Ark reggae recording studio in Jamaica on which local performers will activate the work throughout the exhibition run. These installations will accompany a vast selection of pictorial works featuring Simmons' signature technique—a striking erasure effect that he achieves by executing an image to its completion then smearing it with his hands.



**Left:** Gary Simmons. *Step into the Arena (The Essentialist Trap)*, 1994. Wood, metal, canvas, Ultrasuede, pigment, ropes, and shoes. 85 × 120 × 120 in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the Peter Norton Family Foundation, 95.83a-g. © Gary Simmons. Photo: Sheldan C. Collins. **Right:** Gary Simmons. *In the Blink of an Eye*, 2006. Pigment and oil on panel. 120 × 480 in. Planned acquisition, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. © Gary Simmons. Installation view: *Gary Simmons: Public Enemy*, MCA Chicago, June 13 – October 1, 2023. Photo: Shelby Ragsdale, © MCA Chicago.

"This comprehensive survey of Gary Simmons' complex, hard-hitting work, is both long overdue and timely. Posing sharp questions about what we, as individuals and as a society, remember and what we are made to forget, Simmons' work touches on urgent political issues while probing the spaces between history and collective memory." said **MCA James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator René Morales**.

*Gary Simmons: Public Enemy* is curated by René Morales, James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator, and Jadine Collingwood, Assistant Curator, with Jack Schneider, Curatorial Associate, of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. The exhibition is accompanied by a major exhibition catalogue and a slate of related programming.

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At Pérez Art Museum Miami, the exhibition is presented by Citi with lead individual support from Patricia and William Kleh. Support from Ford Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and Funding Arts Network is gratefully acknowledged.

### **ABOUT GARY SIMMONS**

Gary Simmons was born in 1964 in New York City, where he was raised. Today he lives and works in Los Angeles. He received a BFA in 1988 from the School of Visual Arts, New York, and an MFA in 1990 from the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia; he also studied at Hunter College, New York. He has received numerous awards, including the Studio Museum in Harlem Joyce Alexander Wein Prize (2013), the George Gund Foundation USA Gund Fellowship (2007), and the National Endowment for the Arts Interarts Grant (1990).

Simmons' work has been the subject of major exhibitions worldwide. He has had solo exhibitions at institutional venues including California African American Museum, Los Angeles; Drawing Center, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Bohen Foundation, New York; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Simmons' work has been included in group exhibitions at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Blaffer Art Museum, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco; Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, St. Louis; and the Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, among many other institutions.

His works can be found in numerous public collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Baltimore Museum of Art; Colección Jumex, Mexico City; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Portland Art Museum, Oregon; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Pérez Art Museum Miami.

### **ABOUT PAMM**

Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), led by Director Franklin Sirmans, promotes artistic expression and the exchange of ideas, advancing public knowledge and appreciation of art, architecture, and design, and reflecting the diverse community of its pivotal geographic location at the crossroads of the Americas. The nearly 40-year-old South Florida institution, formerly known as Miami Art Museum (MAM), opened a new building, designed by world-renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron, on December 4, 2013 in Downtown Miami's Maurice A. Ferré Park. The facility is a state-of-the-art model for sustainable museum design and progressive programming and features 200,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor program space with flexible galleries; shaded outdoor verandas; a waterfront restaurant and bar; a museum shop; and an education center with a library, media lab, and classroom spaces.

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