

Henry

MEDIA RELEASE

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press@henryart.org

Henry Art Gallery to Showcase the Work of Gary Simmons and Elaine Cameron-Weir

Seattle, WA—The Henry Art Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of two new exhibitions: *Gary Simmons: The Engine Room* and *Elaine Cameron-Weir: STAR CLUB REDEMPTION BOOTH*. Both exhibitions will feature newly commissioned works and will be activated through a range of virtual and in-person programs. A virtual press tour with curators Shamim M. Momin and Nina Bozicnik will be held on April 27 (details to follow).

Please note that the following information is subject to change. Prior to publication, please email press@henryart.org to confirm dates, titles, and other information.

Gary Simmons: The Engine Room

April 3 – August 22, 2021



Gary Simmons, *B Sides*, 2021. Chalk paint, cold wax and oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist.

The work of Gary Simmons (b. 1964, New York, NY) explores racial, social, and cultural politics, and examines the ways in which we attempt to reconstruct the past via personal and collective memory. Simmons's practice has evolved over the past three decades to incorporate painting, sculpture, installation, and interactive architectural environments. His work is occupied by the unfixed nature of an African-American past that remains open to the vagaries of memory—what was revealed, what was remembered, and what has been hidden—through pop cultural imagery from sports, music, film, and cartoons. In particular, music and music history figure prominently in this presentation, refracted through the lens of racial identity and representation.

For this commissioned exhibition, Simmons created a large-scale wall painting, a suite of new paintings and sculptures, and a sculptural installation, drawing together disparate components to create space for new interaction and invention. The wall painting riffs on the artist's characteristic "erasure drawings," in which he uses sprayed and physically manipulated chalk on blackboard paint to create ghostly images—in this case, of the lesser-known recordings of Jimi Hendrix 45rpm records—the titular *B-Sides*. Over many years of research, Simmons has collected and archived band and concert posters from cities around the world in which he has worked (including additions from Seattle music history), digitally reshaping and recomposing them, then adding another layer of physical intervention as the resulting printed pieces are collaged, rotated, ripped, and painted onto panels.

The posters become a single giant painting installation on the interior of the architectural sculpture, *Garage Band*, which recalls a schematic of a typical suburban garage, a space that evokes a site of creation, invention, and experimentation—from casual tinkering to the genesis of

major music movements and tech innovations. As the exhibition title, *The Engine Room*, suggests, the installation will function as a generative, interactive space. As both a private laboratory and a public stage drawing on diverse historical and present-day areas of the Seattle music scene, *Garage Band* will be activated by a series of musician residencies over the run of the exhibition tapping into influential genres and practices that are nonetheless atypically associated with the popular conception of the Seattle music scene.

The Engine Room residencies are co-organized by the Henry and LANGSTON, an arts & culture organization that guides generative programs and community partnerships centering Black art, artists, and audiences and honors the ongoing legacy of Seattle's Black Central Area. May residents are The Black Tones; June resident is Ishmael Butler of Shabazz Palaces and Digable Planets; and July features several artists in a build-a-band residency that revives the "Jambalaya" improvisational and experimental jam sessions of Seattle music's recent past.

Gary Simmons earned a BFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York and a MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. He is the recipient of the Joyce Alexander Wein Prize, Studio Museum in Harlem; USA Gund Fellowship; Penny McCall Foundation Grant; and Interarts Grant, National Endowment for the Arts. Simmons has exhibited nationally and internationally, including solo exhibitions at the California African American Museum, Los Angeles; Perez Art Museum, Miami; Museum of Modern Art of Fort Worth; and Kunsthaus Zürich; as well as myriad group exhibitions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, among others. His work is included in major museum collections across the globe including those of the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.

Gary Simmons: The Engine Room is organized by Shamim M. Momin, Director of Curatorial Affairs, and commissioned with the generous support of John and Shari Behnke.

Elaine Cameron-Weir: STAR CLUB REDEMPTION BOOTH

April 3 – September 12, 2021



Elaine Cameron-Weir, *Untitled (crucifix)* [detail], 2020. Stainless steel, concrete textile, laboratory hardware, pewter, glass. Courtesy of the artist, JTT, New York, and Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles. Photo: Charles Benton.

Throughout her work in sculpture and writing, Elaine Cameron-Weir (b. 1985, Canada) grapples with questions of individual and collective human survival, while also considering the potential for renewal and transformation in states of being and forms of knowledge. Her work is informed by belief systems that structure how people make sense and meaning of the world—from science and religion to the nation state. Often repurposing objects with previous scientific, medical, or military functions, Cameron-Weir creates exquisitely assembled forms that conjure speculative uses or ritual applications in times past and future.

For her exhibition at the Henry, Cameron-Weir has created new work that considers the void left in the wake of loss. At the center of the installation are two human-sized, metal cases—military equipment designed to transport bodily remains—that serve as counterweights to conveyor belts that rise up from the ground like suspended bodily stand-ins. Each adorned with a cast pewter disk emblazoned with the repeating image of a crucifix, these sculptures interrogate the role that ideas of transcendence and sacrifice play in social systems that arbitrate the value of corporeal existence. Cast from a mold typically used in the mass production of cheap metal trinkets, the pewter disks reinforce the operations of the conveyor belts, making uncomfortable connections between bodies, commodities, and disposability. In another sculpture, a reimagined funerary backdrop vibrates with neon light and theatrical spotlights. The result turns a tool of mourning into a performative object with allusions to commerce and artifice that

suggests the potential exploitation of human vulnerability and grief. Cameron-Weir's choice of a modular, metal floor—conventionally used as subflooring to hide cables—creates a reflective, stage-like setting that emphasizes the conditions of illusion echoed throughout the installation. The sculptures themselves read as portable props that could be moved and reassembled, reproducing the story they tell elsewhere.

STAR CLUB REDEMPTION BOOTH casts doubt on the promise of progress and benevolence woven into official narratives and peddled by authority figures, and considers the potential created when familiar frameworks lose meaning and the machinations of systems become visible. Through the dual references to death and rebirth and evocations of hope as well as foreboding inside her installation, Cameron-Weir asks, what expires and what survives when things fall apart: does the corruption of old models adapt, or could alternative ways of being prevail in these future worlds?

Elaine Cameron-Weir earned a BFA from the Alberta College of Art and Design and a MFA from the New York University Steinhardt School. She is the recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. Select solo exhibitions include *exhibit from a dripping personal collection*, Dortmunder Kunstverein (2018); *Outlooks: Elaine Cameron-Weir*, Storm King Art Center, New York (2018); and *Elaine Cameron-Weir: viscera has questions about itself*, New Museum, New York (2017). She has shown nationally and internationally in group exhibitions at the Remai Modern, Saskatoon; Philadelphia Museum of Art; and Fellbach Small Sculpture Triennial, among others. Her work is held in numerous collections, including those of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Elaine Cameron-Weir: STAR CLUB REDEMPTION BOOTH is organized by Nina Bozicnik, Curator.

ABOUT THE HENRY

The Henry Art Gallery is internationally recognized for bold and challenging exhibitions, for being the first to premiere new works by established and emerging artists, and for highlighting contemporary art practice through a roster of multidisciplinary programs. Containing more than 27,000 works of art, the museum's permanent collection is a significant cultural resource available to scholars, researchers, and the general public. The Henry is located on the University of Washington campus in Seattle, Washington. Visit henryart.org to learn more.

Henry Art Gallery
University of Washington

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MAILING ADDRESS

Henry Art Gallery
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TEMPORARY HOURS

Saturday & Sunday, 10 AM – 5 PM

ADMISSION

Free though June 30, 2021

INFORMATION

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