

Renowned American Artist Gary Simmons Exhibits at Simon Lee Gallery in London

April 28, 2011

LONDON.- Simon Lee Gallery presents its second solo exhibition of the renowned American artist Gary Simmons. For Gary Simmons, the act of erasure has been a central theme in his work throughout his career. Referencing film, architecture, and white American popular culture, his new "erasure" drawings move away from the use of paint and canvas, and revert back to pastel and chalk on black or white paper, which is where his practice began.

Inspired by Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film *The Shining*, Simmons uses the iconic imagery of the Overlook Hotel for one of his new drawings, whose imposing architecture takes on a haunting personality of its own. The image also incorporates the structure of The Bryce Hospital in Alabama – an institution to house African Americans deemed "insane" in the early 20th Century. This alludes to the root of the inspiration of this new body of work: haunted spaces; Structures containing traces of memories, people, and stories that are no longer there but continue to resonate in the collective consciousness of viewer. The combination of social history and cultural reference works here to create an image alive with its ghostly past. By erasing only layers and fragments of these images, the artist demonstrates the impossibility of eradicating racial and cultural stereotypes from our collective identity.

The artist touches on a number of recognisable motifs from the film, like the tricycle in *Big Wheel Spiral*, and the infamous text "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" in *The Diamond and The Page*. He uses the images not only to convey the idea of haunted structures and spaces, but also to elicit personal memories and experiences. Here the notion of the haunted space moves away from architecture, and manifests itself in the mind of the viewer.

Gary Simmons (b. 1964), lives and works in New York City. He graduated from the School of Visual Arts in New York, and completed an MFA at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. Simmons' work has been included in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Studio Museum of Harlem, New York; Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis; the Rubell Family Collection, Miami; the Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.