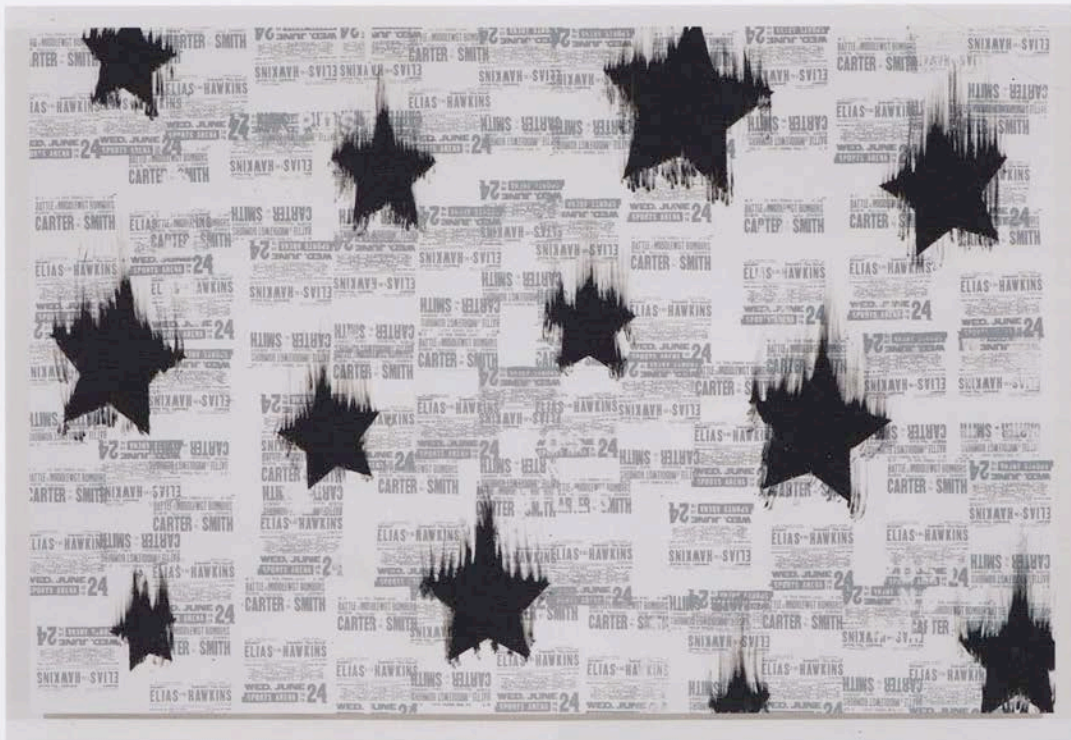


2013 Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize Gary Simmons



Gary Simmons
Hurricane, 2013
Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York

On October 28, 2013, Gary Simmons was awarded the eighth annual Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize at Gala 2013. Established by jazz impresario, musician and philanthropist George Wein, in memory of his wife Joyce, a dedicated Trustee of The Studio Museum in Harlem, the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize honors the legacy of a woman whose life embodies a commitment to the power and possibilities of art and culture.

Throughout her life, Joyce was deeply involved with philanthropy and the arts. Together, Joyce and George created a brilliant collection of African-American art dating from the 1920s to the 1990s, which was shown pub-

licly for the first time at the Boston University Art Gallery just a few months after Joyce's passing. Journalist Ed Bradley noted in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition that to his friends Joyce and George, "collecting art was like collecting knowledge."

In keeping with Joyce's support for living artists, the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize recognizes and honors the artistic achievements of an African-American artist who demonstrates great innovation, promise and creativity. Envisioned as an extension of the Studio Museum's mission to support experimentation and excellence in contemporary art, the Prize

2013 Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize Gary Simmons

includes an unrestricted monetary award of \$50,000.

Gary Simmons was born in New York in 1964. He received a BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 1988 and an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 1990. After his tenure at CalArts, Simmons returned to New York and set up a studio in a former school building, where he found himself clearing away blackboards to make space for his sculptures. Soon after, Simmons began his first series of chalk drawings on blackboards, focusing on the development of racial, class and cultural identities in educational settings. This work paved the way for Simmons's signature "erasure" technique, in which he smudges his chalk drawings with his hands or body, rendering their imagery ghostly and uncertain. While Simmons is widely known for these works, he has often defined himself as a sculptor and has consistently worked across media, from wall drawings and sky writing to found objects and fiberglass.

"Simmons came of age aesthetically in the 1990s and his work represents the fluid hybridity of that time," wrote Thelma Golden in the exhibition catalogue for *Gary Simmons* (2002). "He entered this cacophonous conversation with an arsenal of images that refer to

both high and low culture, images that are significant in terms of their obvious embrace of real and readable content as well as their allegiance to the power and beauty of pure form."

Over the course of a career spanning more than two decades, Simmons has built this arsenal into a powerful and profound visual vocabulary that both leverages the potency of familiar images and draws from imagined spaces. A recent body of work draws on the artist's lifelong passion for sports, and incorporates drawings of 1930s posters for historic boxing matches between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling. These and other works are featured in the comprehensive monograph *Gary Simmons: Paradise* (2012).

In addition to his 2002–03 solo show, co-organized by the Studio Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Simmons has been featured in Studio Museum exhibitions including *The Bearden Project* (2012), *Collected. Vignettes* (2011), *30 Seconds Off an Inch* (2009–10) and *Collection in Context* (2008). His work has been widely exhibited around the world, including in one-person exhibitions at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; the Bohemian Foundation, New York; and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. His work is in the collections of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Studio Museum; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among others. Simmons's commitment to creating work in public spaces is evidenced by two major commissions, *Reflection of a Future Past (Black)* (2009) for New York-Presbyterian Hospital and *Blue Field Explosions* (2009) for AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, home of the Dallas Cowboys.



Gary Simmons
Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York