

GARY SIMMONS: THE ENGINE ROOM

April 3, 2021 - August 22, 2021

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 45mm 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: The Engine Room is organized by Shamim M. Momin, Director of Curatorial Affairs, and commissioned with the generous support of John and Shari Behnke. Media sponsorship provided by KEXP.



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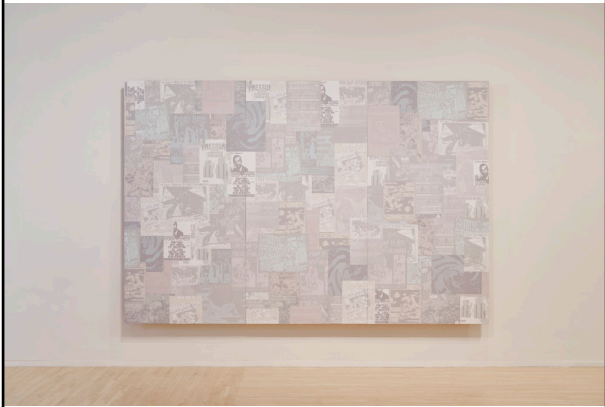
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Gary Simmons. Installation view of *Gary Simmons: The Engine Room*, 2021, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Jonathan Vanderweit.

1.		<p>Gary Simmons (born 1964, New York, NY) <i>B Sides</i>, 2021 Chalk paint, cold wax and oil on canvas Each: 144 × 120 × 2 inches (365.8 × 304.8 × 5.1 cm) Overall: 144 × 360 × 2 inches (365.8 × 914.4 × 5.1 cm) Courtesy of the artist</p>
2.		<p>Gary Simmons (born 1964, New York, NY) <i>Big Block</i>, 2021 Foam, glues, plaster, wood, casters, foil, steel chain, hardware, and paint Overall: 66 ½ × 96 × 96 inches (168.9 × 243.8 × 243.8 cm) Courtesy of the artist</p>
3.		<p>Gary Simmons (born 1964, New York, NY) <i>Blackout</i>, 2021 Printed matter and glues on plywood 96 × 144 × 3 ¾ inches (243.8 × 365.8 × 9.5 cm) Courtesy of the artist</p>

<p>4a.</p>		<p>Gary Simmons (born 1964, New York, NY) <i>Garage Band</i>, 2021 Structure: Wood, plywood, printed matter, glue and hardware 198 × 288 × 288 in (502.9 × 731.5 × 731.5 cm) Courtesy of the artist</p>
<p>4b.</p>		<p>Gary Simmons (born 1964, New York, NY) <i>Garage Band</i>, 2021 Shelf: Wood, glue, and hardware, Christmas lights: Vintage electric string lights, Foil box no. 1: Cardboard tape, plaster, and foil, Gas tank: Metal cast, Helmet: Found object, Milk metal crate: Found object, plastic, and galvanized steel, Plaster box no. 1: Cardboard, tape, and plaster, Plaster box no. 2: Cardboard, tape, and plaster, Plaster box no. 3: Cardboard, tape, and plaster, Plaster box no. 4: Cardboard, tape, and plaster, Small engine: Foam, glue, plaster, and foil, String lights: Vintage electric string lights, 28 glass bulbs Dimensions variable Courtesy of the artist</p>

4c.		<p>Gary Simmons (born 1964, New York, NY) <i>Garage Band</i>, 2021 Sound equipment: Wood, plywood, glue, metal, sound, and electric components Dimensions variable Courtesy of the artist</p>
5.		<p>Gary Simmons (born 1964, New York, NY) <i>RGB</i>, 2021 Printed matter and glues on plywood 96 × 144 × 3 ¾ inches (243.8 × 365.8 × 9.5 cm) Courtesy of the artist</p>
6.		<p>Gary Simmons (born 1964, New York, NY) <i>Whiteout</i>, 2021 Printed matter and glues on plywood 96 × 144 × 3 ¾ inches (243.8 × 365.8 × 9.5 cm) Courtesy of the artist</p>