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MCA Chicago's exhibition *Gary Simmons: Public Enemy to touch on themes of history, memory, and popular culture*

CHICAGO— The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago's upcoming exhibition, *Gary Simmons: Public Enemy*, a 60+ piece survey of artist Gary Simmons's work, opens on June 13, 2023. The presentation, organized by James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator René Morales, Assistant Curator Jadine Collingwood, and Curatorial Assistant Jack Schneider, is the most comprehensive look at Simmons's work to date.

Simmons's artwork exposes the hidden histories that permeate U.S. visual culture, drawing from a host of popular genres including sports, cinema, television, music, architecture, and art. In this timely exhibition, audiences will gain a holistic understanding of the role played by these and other cultural outlets in shaping social understandings of race and collective memory.

Artworks like *Step Into the Arena (The Essentialist Trap)*, 1994, and *Lineup*, 1993, address the spectacularization of Black bodies within the media, sports industry and other forms of mass media entertainment. *Disinformation Supremacy Board*, 1989, and *Six-X*, 1989, tackle the ideological undercurrents that run beneath the versions of history that are passed on through the educational system. Consisting of three immense drawings created directly on the museum's walls especially for this exhibition, *1964*, 2006, alludes to well-known examples of urbanism, architecture, and popular cinema to reveal forgotten stories of social unrest and political struggle. In numerous series that reference cult films such as *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Deliverance*, and *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes*, Simmons takes on Hollywood's role in shaping who we are and what we remember. Works like *Hold Up*, *Wait a Minute*, 2021, and *Rogue Wave*, 2021, draw from racist imagery in vintage animation, including Disney and Looney Tunes cartoons from the 1930s and 1940s, to address the anxieties and turbulence of the contemporary moment.

Additionally, the MCA will present *Recapturing Memories of the Black Ark*, 2014-ongoing, a sculptural installation inspired by the recording studio of legendary Jamaican record producer Lee

'Scratch' Perry. Built from materials found in the Tremé neighborhood of New Orleans after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the sculpture serves as an open platform for conversation, music, and performance. The MCA will be activating the work at different locations throughout Chicago. The schedule for these talks and performances will be announced in early 2023.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

GARY SIMMONS uses icons and stereotypes of American popular culture to create works that address personal and collective experiences of race and class. Born in New York in 1964, Simmons received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 1988, and his MFA from CalArts in 1990, studying under the tutelage of Charles Gaines, Michael Asher, Catherine Lord, and others.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CHICAGO

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The MCA interweaves exhibitions, performances, collections, and educational programs while providing a place for audiences to contemplate and discuss contemporary art in pursuit of a creative and diverse future. The MCA believes in the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) as a platform to enact structural change. The museum is generously supported by its Board of Trustees; individual and corporate members; private and corporate foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and government agencies. Museum capital improvements are supported by a Public Museum Capital Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

The MCA is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue and is open 10 am to 5 pm Wednesday to Sunday and Tuesdays (free for IL residents) from 10 am to 9 pm. The museum is closed on Mondays. Suggested general admission of \$15 for adults and \$8 for seniors. Admission is free for all youth 18 and under, members of the military and veterans, and MCA members. Find more information about MCA's exhibitions, programs, and special events at mcachicago.org or at 312.280.2660.