

SIKKEMA
JENKINS&CO.
MARK THOMAS GIBSON
WHIRLYGIG!

February 3 – March 11, 2023

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is pleased to present *WHIRLYGIG!*, a solo exhibition of recent work by Mark Thomas Gibson. The drawings and paintings featured here were produced during Gibson's 2021-22 Hodder Fellowship at Princeton University, and shown in the exhibition *HERE YE, HEAR YE!!* at Princeton's Lewis Center for the Arts. *WHIRLYGIG!* will be on view February 3 through March 11, 2023.

Mark Thomas Gibson approaches the chaos and contradictions of America's present as an ever-evolving condition of its own past. Through painting and drawing, his imagery engages the traditions of history painting and caricature, emphasizing the intrinsic surrealities of American culture and its tendency towards mythologizing itself. Gibson employs the aesthetics of satirical cartoons in his work for the immediacy of their subversive, concise messaging. Simultaneously reflecting, critiquing, and mocking societal power structures and cultural hegemonies, Gibson's work presents a narrative vision of America that implicates both creator and viewer as active participants within its story.

The works in *WHIRLYGIG!* directly address the tumultuous social and political events that have come to define the first quarter of the 21st century. This selection of works visualizes the relentless flow of information inundating social networks, news channels, and media outlets. A wide array of motifs and characters evolve in Gibson's world, including steam pipes that scream while you work, trip wires that catch you on your way out, and a vibrant green path of musical phrases that snakes through the crowd at a rally. All the while, white gloved magic acts are prayed over by clasped hands with even whiter knuckles. Down the way, captured Klan hoods wave in the breeze past sticky situations that lose their hold of entangled legs as they churn. It's a *WHIRLYGIG!*

Initially conceived of as an examination of the early Biden presidency, this body of work soon evolved into a larger interrogation of American ideologies and their underlying subtexts. In *Rally Jams* (2022), this sense of timeless pandemonium abounds. A bright green knot bearing excerpts of quotable songs envelope a pair of disembodied, clasped hands and striding feet, while the ghostly eyes of a Klan hood peek from the corner. Another set of hands along the top of the painting incites the horns of a bison with a brandished red flag; the entire composition is illuminated by the glow of a toy sword, set ablaze as a burning cross and lying on the ground in front. Confronting these dystopic manifestations head-on, *WHIRLYGIG!* offers a striking assessment of a shared time and space within the mediated disorientation of our current reality.

Mark Thomas Gibson (b. 1980, Miami, FL) received his BFA from The Cooper Union in 2002 and his MFA from Yale School of Art in 2013. In 2022, Gibson was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship; he was also a 2021-22 Hodder Fellow at Princeton University and received a Pew Fellowship from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage in 2021. He was awarded residencies at Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY, and the Elizabeth Murray Artist Residency by Collarworks, Troy, NY, in 2021; he was also a resident at the MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH, in 2017. In 2016, Gibson co-curated the traveling exhibition *Black Pulp!* with William Villalongo. He has released two artist books, *Early Retirement* (2017), and *Some Monsters Loom Large* (2016).

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

JOSEPHINE HALVORSON

MARCH 17 – APRIL 22

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