

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA
January 25, 2013

What..... **Solo Exhibition: *A Great Cloud of Witnesses***
Media Room: *Question Bridge: Black Males*
Viewing Room: Paul Rucker: *Sounds Like...* and *Proliferation*

Where..... **Catharine Clark Gallery, 150 Minna Street**
San Francisco, CA 94105

Exhibition Dates..... **March 2 through April 20, 2013**
Opening **Saturday, March 2**
Panel Discussion 3:30-5pm
Reception 5-7pm

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Fall of Spring, 2013
Pencil on found chairs;
58 x 34 x 36 inches

San Francisco, CA: Catharine Clark Gallery announces the solo exhibition *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* by **Travis Somerville**, and the Media Room presentation of *Question Bridge: Black Males*, by Chris Johnson, Hank Willis Thomas, Bayeté Ross Smith, and Kamal Sinclair. Work by Paul Rucker will be shown in the Viewing Room. The exhibition dates are **March 2 through April 20, 2013**. The reception will be held on **Saturday, March 2, from 5 to 7 pm**, preceded by a **panel discussion from 3:30-5pm**. *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* coincides with Travis Somerville’s solo exhibition *Rebirth of a Nation: Travis Somerville’s 1963*, curated by Diana Daniels, which runs March 3 through May 5, 2013 at the Crocker Art Museum with a reception on March 23 from 2:30-4:30pm.

For his 2013 solo exhibition at Catharine Clark Gallery, **Travis Somerville** continues his exploration of historical memory. How is it that certain stories reduced to sound bites and repeated ad nauseam become the collective truth? Through imagery that invites an investigation into the impact of iconographic legacy and the current state of human rights, Somerville critically examines the continued cultural implications of the Civil Rights movement. Bringing appropriated material from the past into dialogue with imagery from today’s “post racial” society, the artist makes complex montages that appose imagery from a bygone era with that of contemporary news stories on the subjects of immigration, child labor in Uzbekistan, and Arab Spring uprisings. The resulting works are confrontational and serve as a springboard for conversations about multiculturalism, truth, and the lasting power of images.



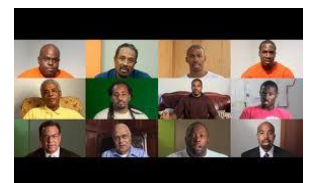
Hamma Pahtada, 2013
Pencil and gesso on flag
and cotton sack; 144 x 78
inches

The exhibition title, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*, is drawn from a biblical passage in Hebrews 12:1-2 that suggests the importance of remembering forgotten lives. Somerville reaches out to these “witnesses,” coloring their individual stories so often lost within the broader contexts of history and culture. Critically layering information, typography, and references from both antiquated and contemporary sources, the artist recontextualizes traditional history painting, focusing on specific, dramatic moments in human experience, while also conveying larger moral and intellectual messages. In *The Ballad of George Stinney*, Somerville tells the story of George Stinney, who was executed in 1944 at the age of 14. Sentenced to death by electric chair, and still a mere child, Stinney had to be propped up by his bible to securely fit within the chair. Somerville reflects on this historic injustice: a set of found schoolchildren chairs are suspended in the air, tightly wound with rope, a bible tucked in its coils. Similarly, the tapestry *Hamma Pahtada* confronts the issues of forced cotton picking and child labor in Uzbekistan, formerly the largest supplier to United States clothing manufacturers. The piece conjoins an American flag with a 1940s cotton picker’s bag, which is adorned with Uzbekistan flag iconography and an individual Uzbekistani child laborer’s portrait. The title, a phrase that plasters the empty schools, businesses, and institutions in Uzbekistan, loosely translates to “everybody’s gone cotton picking.” Paying homage to Stinney’s tragic tale, as well as nameless laborers, Somerville challenges the social frameworks of memory and history, telling stories often neglected.

Somerville asserts that racism is a multicultural issue in our global community and that though it has gone beyond “whiteness,” inequality has yet to be overcome.

Raised in the South during the 1960s in a white, liberal household, Somerville has a personal experience with the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements of the era. Briefly studying at the Maryland Institute College of Art, he settled in San Francisco and attended the San Francisco Art Institute. Somerville’s work has been included in numerous museum exhibitions: the University of Georgia, de Saisset Museum at Santa Clara University, Florida A&M University, the Laguna Art Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, San Francisco Arts Commission, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among others. Somerville’s work was recently exhibited in *Newtopia: The State of Human Rights*, an international show of 70 contemporary artists whose work is dedicated to an investigation on the state of human rights. The exhibition was held at various prominent cultural institutions in Mechelen, Belgium, and was curated by Katerina Gregos. Somerville has exhibited with Catharine Clark Gallery since 1996.

Presented in the Catharine Clark Media Room is the single-channel video *Question Bridge: Black Males*, part of an ongoing, transmedia project to “represent and redefine Black male identity in America.” Consisting of over 1,500 interviews and exchanges by Black men of different demographics, ages, and political sectors, *Question Bridge* hopes to “overcome exclusion and estrangement” in the Black community. Responding to candid questions such as “What do you do to keep the faith?” and “Do you really feel free?,” the piece creates a “group generated identity map.” The *Question Bridge* project has many other components, including community engagement events, educational initiatives, and an interactive, user-generative website. *Question Bridge: Black Males* is a project created by Chris Johnson, Hank



Still from *Question Bridge: Black Male, 2012*
Single-channel video; 2 hours 53 minutes

Willis Thomas, Bayeté Ross Smith, and Kamal Sinclair. The executive producers of the project are Delroy Lindo, Deborah Willis, and Jesse Williams. It was edited and assembled by Will Sylvester and Rosa White. *Question Bridge: Black Males* has screened extensively in 2012, at venues including the Sundance Film Festival New Frontier, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Oakland Museum of California, and the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2013, it will exhibit at the San Francisco Exploratorium, Missouri History Museum, Birmingham Museum of Art, and the Gantt Center for African American Art. The piece has been critically reviewed by the *Huffington Post*, *NY Daily News*, the *Oakland Tribune*, *CNN*, and *LA 411*, among others. This is *Question Bridge's* first screening at Catharine Clark Gallery.



Detail of *Water*, from the series *Sounds Like....*, 2009
Digital print and single-channel video; 24 x 36 inches

Sounds Like... by Paul Rucker is a series of four drawings and videos that merge the symbolic languages of art and music. Deceptively simple, these works draw graphically from musical notations and symbolically from the four classic elements: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. Rucker creates a coded form of expression within a beautifully abstracted aesthetic, as the works reference major events in the history of "Americans of African descent." Subjects in the series range from lynching and indentured servitude to the murder of Emmett Till and the power of the Civil Rights movement. *Water* utilizes the musical notation *ties*, its arced shape repeating and overlapping on the canvas, emulating waves of the ocean. Upon close inspection, the viewer sees Emmett Till's name repeated over the entire canvas under the cresting waves. The piece elliptically tells the tale of this young man, whose murder is noted as pivotal for the Civil Rights Movements. At only 14, Emmett Till was

brutally beaten to death and then thrown into the river of Mississippi with a 70 pound cotton gin, for allegedly flirting with a white woman. According to Rucker, this piece is meant to capture Till's experience in the water, looking up through the waves for the three days before his body was found. Also presented is a video work, *Proliferation*, which poetically describes the growth of incarceration from the 1800s to the current statistic of 2.3 million people. Set to his own musical score (Rucker is also a cellist), the artist overlays colored dots across a map of the United States, assigning each era a different color. Believing that "art can tell stories," Rucker transforms a dry statistic into a compelling work of art. Paul Rucker is a visual artist, composer, and musician. In 2012, he received an award for Visual Art from the Creative Capital Foundation for *Recapitulation* and a 10week residency at Headlands Center for the Arts in California, among many other awards and residencies. Past residencies include Blue Mountain Center, Ucross Foundation, Pilchuck Glass School, and the Rockefeller Foundation Study Center in Bellagio, Italy. He has garnered critical attention in *Seattle Magazine*, *Seattle Times*, and *The Wire*, among others. This is Rucker's first exhibition at Catharine Clark Gallery.

A Great Cloud of Witnesses is presented in conjunction with Somerville's solo show at the **Crocker Art Museum** in Sacramento, curated by Diana L. Daniels, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art. *Rebirth of A Nation: Travis Somerville's 1963* is a tightly focused exhibition that showcases the Crocker Art Museum's newly acquired, mixed-media installation *1963*, along with four large-scale paintings and a site-specific wall drawing. The exhibition dates are March 3 – May 5, 2013. *Rebirth of A Nation: Travis Somerville's 1963* will be accompanied by a 20-page catalogue with full-color reproductions written by Diana L. Daniels.

Associated Events

April 4

EOS Ensemble Benefit Concert 7-9pm

April 20

Closing Reception 3-6pm

Performance by Paul Rucker 4pm

About Catharine Clark Gallery

Established in 1991, **Catharine Clark Gallery** presents the work of contemporary artists. A wide range of media is represented in the gallery's program with an emphasis on content-driven work that challenges the traditional use of materials, formal aesthetics, and concept. Catharine Clark Gallery was the first San Francisco gallery to create a dedicated media room, presenting new genres and experimental video art with each changing exhibition. Exhibitions are hosted on a six-week schedule and generally feature one or two solo presentations in addition to media room installations. The gallery regularly participates in national and international art fairs.

Housed in a former 1920s farming equipment warehouse, redesigned by Los Angeles-based architectural designer Tim Campbell, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, is situated among numerous arts-related landmark buildings in San Francisco's Yerba Buena Neighborhood; it is adjacent to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and the Museum of the African Diaspora (MOAD) and is one block from the Contemporary Jewish Museum (CJM) and the Museum of Craft and Folk Art (MoCFA). The gallery is open Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm. For more information, please visit www.cclarkgallery.com or email info@cclarkgallery.com.

In March of 2010, the gallery opened **Catharine Clark Gallery, New York**, a project space in a residential apartment in New York's Chelsea neighborhood. Installations of gallery artists' work are presented as "pop-up" exhibits at the New York location several times a year (313 West 14th Street, Apt. 2F, between 8th and 9th Avenues). To date, the New York gallery has presented a group show about contemporary drawings, and solo exhibitions of Anthony Disenza, Adam Chapman, Scott Greene, Walter Robinson, and Stephanie Syjuco's work. In 2013, the New York space will feature solo exhibition by Charles Gute and Nina Katchadourian.

2013 Advanced Exhibition Listings

San Francisco

New York

Opening during the Armory Art Fair, March 7 – 10

Solo Exhibition: Charles Gute

Opening during the Frieze Art Fair, May 10 -13

Solo Exhibition: Nina Katchadourian *Sorted Books*

In conjunction with the release of *Sorted Books*, published by Chronicle Books in 2013

Art Fairs and Biennials

March 7-10

Moving Image New York

April 12-14

Dallas Art Fair

May 16 -19

ArtMRKT San Francisco

Oct 10-13

ArtMRKT Texas Contemporary