

CASEY KAPLAN

121 WEST 27TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10001
TEL +1 212 645 7335
FAX +1 212 645 7835
WWW.CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM
INFO@CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

Simon Starling: *The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door*

February 23 – April 22, 2017

Opening Reception: Thursday February 23, 6-8PM

Casey Kaplan is pleased to present *The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door*, Simon Starling's (b. 1967, Epsom, UK) sixth solo exhibition with the gallery. *The Liminal Trio plays the Golden Door* is presented on the heels of Starling's most recent collaborative project titled *At Twilight*, staged in 2016 by the Common Guild in Glasgow and the Japan Society in New York, in which the artist celebrated modernism's continual presence in contemporary culture through the transformation of W. B. Yeats' play *At the Hawk's Well* (1916). For this exhibition, Starling expands upon his multidisciplinary practice to conjure a meeting of three musicians arriving to the United States through Ellis Island at the beginning of the 20th century. The uncovering and re-imagining of historical accounts of immigration offers new insight into our present cultural conditions, and a potential for greater understanding. For Starling, happenings of the past are not simply remembered, but repurposed.

The three musicians assembled for *The Liminal Trio* were selected from a series of photographs by Augustus Frederick Sherman (1865 – 1925), an amateur photographer who worked in the administration at Ellis Island between 1892 and 1925 and produced over 250 photographs of immigrants entering the United States of America through our most historicized gateway. Typically, Sherman would photograph his subjects in their traditional folk costumes, which seem to have been worn (often for the last time) as a symbolic rite of passage. A strong sense of duality exists within each composition, for the photographs are both celebratory and analytical. Sherman revels in the cultural diversities of those who he encountered, while also objectifying his subjects and rendering them as 'types' to be catalogued and processed.

In one photograph, a Southern Italian piper, Antonio Piestineola (one of the few immigrants to be named by Sherman) clutches his zampogna (bagpipe) to his chest, while in another, an unnamed Romanian piper in rough peasant attire holds a simple wooden kaval (an end-blown flute) to his mouth as if about to play. In a third photograph, a female clog dancer from Volendam wears the national costume of the Netherlands and stands gazing expectantly into the middle distance. These three musicians, and the musical traditions they would likely have brought with them, were the inspiration for a contemporary recording that brings these nearly obsolete sounds to life. Realized in New York, Sean Folsom plays the zampogna, Winne Clement blows on the kaval, and Livia Vanaver is clog dancing. This improvised session, orchestrated by Chicago-based musician Joshua Abrams, creates a spare and at times tentative dialogue between the three traditions - Folsom riffing on Southern Italian folk tunes such as the characteristic tarantella, Clement evoking lyrical rural Romanian music, while Vanaver explores the possibilities of the traditional Dutch horlepiep (hornpipe) dance.

Three speakers fed by the individual 'voices' of Folsom, Clement and Vanaver offer musical interpretations that are paired with replicas of the instruments and costumes portrayed in Sherman's photographs. Their likenesses are fabricated in grayscale tones, as no authentic record exists to convey the colors of their clothing (though contemporary reproductions of the photographs often appear dramatically colorized). Under the supervision of costume designer Gustavo Gonzalez, a host of specialized craftspeople including tailors, milliners, and embroiderers were called upon to realize each garment. Finally, three life-size enlargements of Sherman's original images from the archives at Ellis Island inhabit a third space and bring the project full circle.

In lending Sherman's images a material presence, Starling repositions the complexities of Ellis Island's history within an alternate, contemporary realm that waivers between the past and present. A moment in time is isolated among these individuals amidst the twelve million who entered the U.S. between 1892 and 1954, paying heed to our natural origins as the nation's political discord on this very topic heightens. Within each photograph's ephemera, any preconceptions of the time and place existing within the viewer are undone as our imaginations are restored to a palpable simulation of what could have been: The Liminal Trio playing at the Golden Doors of New York.

Simon Starling, the recipient of the 2005 Turner Prize, has exhibited worldwide. In recent years, Starling has presented solo exhibitions at institutions such as The Japan Society, New York (2016); The Common Guild, Glasgow (2016); Rennie Collection, Vancouver (2016); Nottingham Contemporary, England (2016); Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland (2016); Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City (2015); Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Quebec (2015); MCA Chicago (2014); Pérez Art Museum, Miami (2014); Tate Britain, London (2013); Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan (2011); and MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2008). With recent participation in group exhibitions at venues such as the Parrish Art Museum, Watermill (2016) and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2015), Starling will partake in an upcoming exhibition at The Centre Pompidou-Metz, France in March of this year. The artist's work is held in public collections such as The Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo per l'Arte, Turin; The Henry Moore Foundation, Herts; Kunstmuseum Basel; MCA Chicago; Pérez Art Museum, Miami; Seattle Art Museum; SFMoMA, San Francisco; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and TATE Modern, London. Simon Starling lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.