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MARC FOXX

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FRANCES STARK

17 May - 28 June 2014

Reception Saturday 17 May 6:00 to 8:00 pm

MARC FOXX Gallery is pleased to announce *Bobby Jesus's Alma Mater*, a solo exhibition by Los Angeles-based artist Frances Stark. This is Stark's 8th exhibition with the gallery since her first in 1998. Stark has forged a highly respected international reputation for her work and writing while maintaining a strong Los Angeles platform. The work presented in this exhibition is particularly tethered to her home city.

The exhibition draws from Stark's recent work in the 2013 Carnegie International: *Bobby Jesus's Alma Mater b/w Reading the Book of David and/or Paying Attention is Free* (link: <http://ci13.cmoa.org/artists/frances-stark>). The Carnegie presentation was comprised of a video with audio score projected onto a wall mural, a series of vinyl wall texts, and five free takeaway posters. The five paintings in the present show take vertical sections of this wall mural as their *imprimatura*, or first layer.

Additionally, the first of the five posters Stark produced for the Carnegie work is displayed: four copies in the various stages of being unfolded show the poster in its entirety. Details both personal and factual on all images in the wall mural, thus the paintings as well, are presented as a key in this poster.

Bobby Jesus's Alma Mater follows a series of videos Stark made over several years based on text from online chat conversations with men the artist met on the Internet (*My Best Thing*, 2009; *Nothing is Enough*, 2012; *Osservate, Leggete Con Me*, 2012). *Bobby Jesus* follows from—as the artist has described— "these brazen pursuits of

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unlikely alliances," figuring as Stark's studio apprentice, muse, student and teacher. Dubbing Bobby with a name that sounds just like Baby Jesus not only evokes the immaculately conceived supernatural "savior", but stands for the stark reality of that persistent byproduct of sexual intercourse: an actual infant/future man. Stark chronicles Bobby's entrance into her studio in a recently published book Trapped in the V.I.P., which also includes the libretto for the Carnegie video installation.

The Carnegie presentation's audio score featured tracks by Los Angeles-based musician DJ Quik, a key figure in this body of work. One photograph shows a quote: "But I don't know if people are really into that anymore, you know, like art for art's sake? They don't get it. Like I say, my talents are being wasted in hip hop right now." Concurrent with DJ Quik's expressions of dissatisfaction with the state of hip hop and his listener-ship, and his threats of retirement, Stark has come to reflect more precisely on certain aspects of the professional and creative institutions she lives and works within. Recent developments at the University of Southern California, where Stark is a tenured Associate professor, also figure as subjects within this body of work—both in the lyrics of the Carnegie video installation and the scanned page from USC Magazine presented in the paintings. The second half of the exhibition's title, *Alma Mater*, calls up both the familiar definition—the college one attended and/or a college's fight song—as well as "nurturing mother," the term's original meaning.

The present exhibition also includes photographs and several collages. The 29 photos, all printed 7x7" and sandwiched between thick plexiglass, are selections from the artist's active Instagram account @therealstarkiller, and titled as numbers according to their place in this ongoing feed.

Also on display in the exhibition is a limited-edition scarf titled "*Watch out for flying bricks*" —*Baby, my self-liberated bird*. The printed image shows a blue parakeet perched on a black and white brick wall. The artist has worked extensively with bird imagery and has said in an interview with Carnegie curator Daniel Baumann "...The minute I sat down to reflect on fiction's potential for generosity, or lack thereof, one of the parakeets that lives in my studio flew out the front door—just like that, zip, right out the door, into the sky, across the horizon, goodbye. We had named him Baby. And Baby's nonfictional escape prompts the question: How necessary is the cage when

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considering the metaphorical relevance of my birds, which actually live both on top of and inside their cage? Was my bird's sudden and certain exit a crystal-clear message meant to alert me to the fact that I'm quite capable of freeing myself now but I choose not to?"