

Regen Projects is pleased to announce *Well, it's bye-bye / If you call that gone*, an exhibition of recent work by New York-based artist Glenn Ligon. Taking its name from the lyrics of blues musician Mississippi Fred McDowell's song *What's the Matter Now*, this exhibition will present three distinct bodies of work: a selection of *Come Out* paintings, a neon sculpture, and Ligon's seminal silkscreen painting, "Hands" (1996). This marks the artist's fourth solo presentation at the gallery.

Glenn Ligon has a wide-ranging multimedia art practice that encompasses painting, neon, photography, sculpture, print, installation, and video. Perhaps best known for his monochromatic and highly textured text paintings that draw their content from American history, popular culture, and literary works by writers such as James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, Gertrude Stein, Jean Genet, Mary Shelley, and Walt Whitman, his work explores issues of history, language, and cultural identity.

On view in this exhibition will be a series of monumental silkscreen paintings inspired by American Minimalist composer Steve Reich's 1966 taped-speech work *Come Out*. Reich was commissioned to create a piece for a benefit concert to support the defense fund for the Harlem Six, a group of six African-American teenagers who were wrongfully accused of murdering a shopkeeper in Harlem in 1964. Focusing on the taped testimony of Daniel Hamm, who states that he had to open up his police-inflicted bruises to let some of the blood come out to show them that he was injured and needed treatment, Reich's piece isolates the phrase "come out to show them" and loops it over and over again on two different audio channels which play simultaneously. The looped phrase gradually goes out of synch, turning the words spoken into an abstract soundscape. Similarly, Ligon's paintings echo this strategy by repeatedly silk-screening the same phrase by hand, overlapping the layers of words to varying degrees of density and legibility.

Resting on the floor, an upside down double neon depicts the words America. Comprised of a set of identical neons placed at an angle to each other and blinking in a frenetic manner, the seven letters ambiguously represent a nation, place, or concept. A large silkscreen painting entitled *Hands* (1996) uses found media images taken of the Million Man March that took place in Washington, D.C. on October 16, 1995. This particular piece depicts a moment during the march when organizer Minister Louis Farrakhan called upon the attendees to raise their arms in a pledge of solidarity and collective responsibility for social justice. Repeatedly enlarged through the use of a black and white Xerox photocopier, the representational quality of the image is compromised and falls apart as it becomes increasingly coarse and degraded in its larger form. While created in response to a particular

cultural moment, the image nevertheless resonates with the current debates about black visibility and political agency.

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