

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SARAH CROWNER: *PLASTIC MEMORY***



13 MAY – 18 JUNE 2016, LONDON  
PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY, 12 MAY, 6 – 8 PM

**SATURDAY, 14 MAY, 12PM: SARAH CROWNER IN CONVERSATION WITH AMIRA GAD, Simon Lee Gallery, London**

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to present a new series of stitched paintings alongside a ceramic tile mural and floor installation by New York based artist Sarah Crowner, in her first solo show in the UK.

Sarah Crowner draws on art, fashion, graphic design, theatre and performance to create dynamic works that recall 20<sup>th</sup> century geometric abstraction and modernism.

The exhibition title *Plastic Memory* references a term used in ceramics to describe the visual evidence of how wet clay has been kneaded, stretched and manipulated with these traces remaining apparent or “remembered” in the material, even once the object is fired. Whilst the title clearly relates to the ceramic medium of the new wall and floor works in the exhibition, it also neatly conjures Crowner’s relationship to history, materials and the hand-made. She treats the past, the natural world and popular culture as a medium; zooming in, rotating, reversing, cropping, repeating, mirroring, shrinking and enlarging the familiar to engage the viewer, revealing connections between micro and macro, individual and context.

On entering the gallery the viewer is greeted by a celadon green tile wall mural with a stitched painting hung on top. This vibrant, shimmering work sets the tone for the exhibition as Crowner questions the nature of painting, its materials and limits. A glazed-white terracotta tiled platform bisects the gallery floor, inviting viewers to walk over it to view the other paintings in the exhibition. Elevated as a false floor, the pentagon patterned tiles are at once a stage and a kind of purposeful geometric abstraction, encouraging the viewer to become part of the composition of the works. The formal echo between the tessellation of the tiles and the composition of the stitched paintings, between grout and seams, further establishes a relationship between the floor and wall, situating the viewer at the heart of the installation. The tile pattern is based on a pentagon with five different length sides, (recently discovered by mathematicians), which can only repeat when the tile is matched with its mirror. The two reflecting tiles suggest an open book, butterfly wings, or leaf-like panels and beautifully illustrate Crowner’s interest in systems and patterns, production and reproduction, in culture and nature.

Crowner embraces the idea of painting as object; both the painting and the tile works in the exhibition embody the experience of architecture and space, at once within themselves as objects and through their display. Each individual stitched fragment of canvas and each hand-crafted tile is a unique element, a world within a world, yet reliant upon its neighbour in order to contribute to a greater whole. These animated abstract constructions speak simply and seductively of connection, opposition, separation, hierarchy, transition and assimilation.

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To create her new stitched or 'sliced' paintings, Crowner deconstructs and reconstructs her own existing paintings, reconfiguring shapes, colours and contrasting textures and allowing the sewing machine generated seams to remain visible, like plant veins or arteries. She uses a self-designed 'curve machine' to create arc templates on pattern paper for canvas to be cut from, before painting and stitching them to other raw canvas or linen segments. She paints sections in saturated colour – from tomato red to Prussian blue – to imply a presence, a shape, a possibility. Made from soft canvas, the paintings have a velvety surface, whilst the contrasting tiles are glassy and crisp, creating clear clacks when walked upon. This deliberate relationship to the tactile, to craft and the artist's performative engagement with her medium suggests a three-dimensional, physical, relationship to the image and speaks to the viewer of action and the potentiality of painting.

Witty, playful and optimistic, Sarah Crowner's investment in materials and use of colour as form deliberately seduce the viewer, evoking desire and reflecting her interest in how painting can engage the body.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

Sarah Crowner was born in Philadelphia in 1974 and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She received her BA from the University of California, Santa Cruz and her MFA from Hunter College, New York. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Jewish Museum, New York (2015); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2014); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2013); WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, Belgium (2013); ICA, Philadelphia (2013); Zacheta National Museum of Art, Warsaw, Poland (2013); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013); and the 2010 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Everywhere the Line is Looser*, Casey Kaplan, New York (2015); *Interiores*, Travesia Cuatro, Guadalajara, Mexico (2014); *Motifs*, Galerie Catherine Bastide, Brussels, Belgium (2014); *The Wave*, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York (2014); *Rehearsal*, Galerie Nordenhake, Stockholm, Sweden (2012); *Acrobat*, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York (2011); *Ballet Plastique*, Catherine Bastide, Brussels, Belgium (2011). Her work is held in the collections of Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

From 16 April 2016, her work will be the subject of a major solo exhibition, *Beetle in the Leaves*, at MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA.

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Please note this event is free to the public, but booking is advised: [events@simonleegallery.com](mailto:events@simonleegallery.com) / 020 7491 0100.

**Amira Gad** (Egyptian) is Exhibitions Curator at the Serpentine Galleries in London, where she has curated exhibitions by Simon Denny (2015), Jimmie Durham (2015), Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (2015), Julio Le Parc (2014) and Reiner Ruthenbeck (2014). Prior to this, Gad was Managing Curator & Publications at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam where she worked from 2009 to 2014. Outside of the Serpentine Galleries, curated exhibitions include *Considering Dynamics & the Forms of Chaos* with artists Angela Bulloch and Maria Zeres at the Sharjah Art Museum (2016); *Blue Times* at Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna, Austria (2014-2015). She was also curator at Fogo Island Arts of the conference series that took place on Fogo and in Vienna at the MAK. She is a regular contributor to artists catalogues and has edited a number of books on contemporary art. Gad is also Commissioning Editor for Ibraaz, an online platform dedicated to visual culture in the Middle East and North Africa.

Image: Sarah Crowner, *Sliced Red*, 2016, Acrylic on canvas, sewn, 152.4 x 121.9 cm (60 x 48 in.)

For further press information, images and interview requests please contact Julia Kelly-Kennedy: [julia@simonleegallery.com](mailto:julia@simonleegallery.com) / 020 7491 0100.

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