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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speed Art Museum announces Sam Gilliam Assistant Curator of Artist Programs

Diallo Simon-Ponte to oversee the Museum's new visiting artist program, a collaboration with the Sam Gilliam Foundation

Louisville, KY, Apr. 17, 2025 — The Speed Art Museum is pleased to announce the appointment of Diallo Simon-Ponte as the institution's inaugural Sam Gilliam Assistant Curator of Artist Programs. This new role will lead the Museum's Gilliam Visiting Artist Program, which creates opportunities for transformative connections between visiting artists, local creatives and the broader community.

The Gilliam Visiting Artist Program brings two nationally recognized artists to Louisville each year to connect with local artists, students, and community members. Made possible by the generosity of the Sam Gilliam Foundation, the program honors the legacy of the late artist, who spent his formative years in Louisville.

"This program honors Sam's lifelong commitment to Louisville and Kentucky artists. It provides a meaningful opportunity for the Speed to deepen our relationships with artists by offering time, space, and support for creative exploration—and for meaningful connection with our community," said Raphaela Platow, director of the Speed Art Museum. "Diallo brings a deep understanding of artist relations and curatorial practice that makes him the ideal candidate to shape this exciting new chapter at the Speed. His approach is grounded in building meaningful relationships—with artists and with the community—and we're thrilled to see how he'll help foster connection and creative exchange."

The inaugural Gilliam Visiting Artists, Vanessa German and Eric N. Mack, will connect with the Louisville community in 2025 through exhibitions, conversations, and public programs. Their work builds on the Speed's commitment to showcasing a wide range of perspectives and creating opportunities for artists—both local and national—to share ideas, inspire one another, and engage with the public in meaningful ways.

"The Sam Gilliam Foundation is excited for Diallo Simon-Ponte to assume his new position as the Speed Museum's inaugural Sam Gilliam Assistant Curator of Artist Programs, and for him to lead the Gilliam Visiting Artist Program," said Annie Gawlak, President of the Sam Gilliam Foundation. "Diallo's extensive experience working with artists of diverse backgrounds and creating opportunities for meaningful engagement between artists and their communities makes him the ideal person to take on this role, extending Sam's legacy of championing new generations of artists, nurturing artistic innovation, and fostering community engagement and cultural exchange."

About Diallo Simon-Ponte

With a diverse background in curatorial practice and gallery management, Diallo Simon-Ponte is an emerging leader in the contemporary art community. His creative practice is compelled by an exploration of the transatlantic African diaspora as an active and transitional force—approached as a verb—across disciplines. Simon-Ponte is the Founding Curatorial Director of the Limbo Museum in Accra, Ghana, a new cultural institution that labors at the intersection of social sculpture, architecture, art, community, research, and ruin. Previously, he worked at Gagosian Gallery, New York, where he contributed to exhibitions for renowned artists such as Derrick Adams, Rick Lowe, and Lauren Halsey. He has also curated and assisted in exhibitions globally, including in New York, London, and Accra, Ghana. His expertise in artist relations, curatorial research, and exhibition management—paired with his deep appreciation for community-oriented artmaking—positions him to play a key role in shaping the Gilliam Visiting Artist Program. Simon-Ponte steps into his new role at the Speed next month.

"I am honored to join the Speed Art Museum in this new capacity," said Simon-Ponte. "Sam Gilliam's contributions to the art world, particularly his support of artists from Louisville, have shaped so much of what the Speed represents today. I am excited to further this legacy by creating new platforms for artists to engage with the community and inspire meaningful creative conversations."

About the Gilliam Visiting Artist Program

The Gilliam Visiting Artist Program was created in honor of the late Sam Gilliam, a pioneering African American artist who spent his formative years in Louisville and was influenced by the vibrant midcentury art scene in the city. Developed in collaboration with the Sam Gilliam Foundation, the program will invite two artists each year to Louisville, where they will engage with local artists, communities, and the museum's collections. The visiting artists will also offer public programming, including lectures, workshops, and collaborative projects, further enriching the cultural fabric of Louisville.

This new position and program mark a significant step forward in the Speed Art Museum's efforts to engage with living artists and deepen its community connections.

About the Speed Art Museum

The Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, is the state's oldest and largest art museum and has served as a vital cultural resource for the Louisville community and the wider region for nearly 100 years. The Speed's ever-growing encyclopedic collection, timely exhibitions and community-driven programming explore contemporary issues and inspire meaningful personal experiences through the transformative power of art, sparking new conversations and creating opportunities for dialogue. Located on the campus of the University of Louisville but operating as an independent nonprofit institution, the Speed provides visitors from around the world with opportunities to engage with art through public and academic programs, screenings at the Speed Cinema, family offerings in the Art Sparks interactive learning gallery, and more. Fulfilling its mission of inviting everyone to celebrate art forever, the Speed is committed to creating a welcoming and accessible space for the community, including free admission on Sundays, Community Connections artmaking programs, and the Speed for All free membership. Significant upcoming projects include the highly anticipated Speed Art Park opening in October 2025 and the Museum's centennial celebration in 2027. For more information, visit speedmuseum.org.

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