

DANNY SIMMONS

The Journey of Spirit

Exhibition Dates:
September 11 – November 7, 2026

Opening reception:
Thursday, September 10, 2026 | RSVP | 6 to 8 pm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WESTWOOD GALLERY NYC presents *Danny Simmons: The Journey of Spirit*, a thought-provoking exhibition of the artist's paintings, planned with the artist and now marking the first presentation of his work following his passing in June 2026. A highlight in the exhibition, curated by James Cavello, is *Full Circle* (2023), Simmons' eleven-panel mixed media painting installation. The artwork was selected by Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Arts & Design of New York City for a permanent public art installation at the newly constructed Jamaica Bus Depot in Queens. Simmons grew up in Hollis, Queens, an area that was deeply connected to the artist's life and artistic history. He recalled the Q bus line as a lifeline during his early youth, transporting him throughout the boroughs. For the MTA commission, the eleven original paintings were meticulously translated by hand onto large-scale fired glass panels spanning almost 200 feet across and 12 feet high. The colossal installation will be unveiled by MTA Arts & Design in October of 2026. The artist, with his project manager, Margarite Almeida, spent over three years working on the project, along with a fabrication team in Germany. Also included in this exhibition are seventeen recent paintings and works on paper, reflecting the final years in Simmons' artistic evolution.

A celebrated painter, poet, author, and philanthropist, Danny Simmons devoted his life to fostering creativity and expanding opportunities for artists. Best known for his expressive mixed-media abstractions, his work drew inspiration from spirituality, music, memory, and the rhythms of everyday life. Throughout his career, Simmons remained deeply committed to building artistic community and leaving a lasting legacy that would extend well beyond his own studio practice.

Danny Simmons had the unique ability and rare desire to find within art a universal language capable of empowering others. In 1995, alongside his brothers Russell and Joseph (Rev Run) Simmons, he co-founded Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to providing underserved youth with access to the visual arts through education, studio art, and exhibition opportunities. As a result of his mentorship and artistic practice, Simmons conjured the power of art to transcend geographic, temporal, and cultural boundaries and to create opportunities for dialogue, understanding, and transformation.

This philosophy permeated four decades of Simmons' artistic career. In his founding of Neo-African Abstract Expressionism, his paintings reflect interconnected patterns, biomorphic abstractions, and gestural marks that evoke ancestral memory while drawing upon indigenous artistic traditions from Africa and beyond. Simmons often described dots and repetitive mark-making as expressions of humanity's relationship to the natural and spiritual worlds, using abstraction to bridge histories separated by time and distance.

In his later career, textile collage became a significant motif in his paintings. Generationally associated with the passing of knowledge, stories, and familial bonds, quilting proved to be a pivotal vehicle for Simmons in expressing themes of ancestry and collective remembrance. Incorporating Ghanaian Kente cloth, African wax prints, Indonesian batiks, lace, and other textiles directly onto canvas paintings, Simmons created richly layered assemblages. As each material carries histories of trade, culture, migration, and diaspora, it retains the capacity to evoke deeply personal memories within viewers.

The artworks on exhibit represent variations on a singular artistic vision. Throughout his career, Simmons' artwork revisited questions of identity, spirituality, community, and belonging with renewed depth and clarity. *Danny Simmons: The Journey of Spirit* invites viewers to engage with these enduring themes anew, to discover connections with each encounter, and to bear witness to the remarkable determination of Simmons' lifelong devotion to creativity, compassion, community, and the pursuit of connection through art.

Simmons' work has been exhibited extensively throughout the United States and is represented in numerous museum, university, corporate, and public collections. His work has been exhibited by and/or in the collection of the Butler Institute of American Art, Brooklyn Museum, Columbus Museum, Houston Museum of African American Culture, Montclair Art Museum, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Smithsonian Institution, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and many distinguished private collections.

WESTWOOD GALLERY NYC is the exclusive representative of the Danny Simmons Estate.

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