



Open Source Gallery, Inc - 501(c)(3) Organization  
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Gallery Hours: Thursday - Saturday: 2pm - 6pm

## FRANCESCO SIMETI: SWELL

**April 22-May 27, 2017**

Opening reception: April 22, 7-9pm

Francesco Simeti presents *Swell*, a theatrical installation at Open Source Gallery that explores human impact on the environment.

In *Swell*, Simeti transforms appropriated images from Brooklyn waterways, such as the Gowanus Canal, into a motorized, sculptural installation in which the public can contemplate the consequences of human activity on our surroundings. The Gowanus Canal was built in the mid-1800s as an industrial transportation route. All of waste discharged into the canal over time has made the Gowanus Canal into one of the nation's most seriously contaminated bodies of water. The canal was declared a Superfund site in 2010 yet remains the home of industrial factories, small businesses, artist studios and rapidly gentrifying residential areas. Currently the bottom of the canal is coated to a layer of toxic sediment--nicknamed "black mayonnaise"--that averages 10 feet thick, reaching 20 feet in some places. In a twist of irony, this sludge resembles a noxious primordial soup and microbes have evolved to live off the pollution. It seems that the canal has not only become uninhabitable for wildlife, but could be breeding new and previously unidentified organisms uniquely adapted to their putrid environment.



The diametrically opposed elements present in the history of the canal--life and death, order and destruction, reality and fiction, the light-hearted and the devastating--mirror Simeti's practice, which amplifies multifaceted environmental, social and political concerns into an immersive sculptural installation. *Swell* uses ornament and subtext as an instrument of political critique. Playful historical images of Coney Island rides and other human intervention along the water intertwine with scenes of flora and fauna that once flourished along the Gowanus Canal. Adopting a DIY aesthetic, Simeti takes inspiration from puppet theater and Baroque mechanical automata, which combined an awe of nature with an affinity for artifice, to explore the social, cultural and historical significance of Brooklyn waterways. Combining the installation with workshops, collaborative projects and partnerships with local organizations, *Swell* engages with the consequences of human activity on a local level, depicting nature as both a playground and a battle zone, and encourages action. Visitors are invited to explore different avenues of inquiry, taking time for self-reflection while simultaneously connecting with their community and its history.

Francesco Simeti (b. 1968, Italy) received his BA from the Accademia di Belle Arti (Italy). He has created public art projects in the NYC transit system at the 4th Avenue-9th Street Gowanus and the 18th Avenue Bensonhurst Gardens subway stations. Simeti has exhibited at spaces including the Risd Museum (USA), Art & Idea Gallery (Mexico) and Columbia University (USA). His work has been featured at the Shanghai Biennial (China), Palermo Gallery of Modern Art (Italy), MASS MoCA (USA), Musée de Design et d'Arts Appliqués Contemporains (Switzerland), and the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art (USA).

*This exhibition is kindly supported by the New York Council on the Arts.*

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