

For Immediate Release:

Contact 941 Geary – Justin Giarla

Justin@941geary.com

**941 Geary Presents:
60/30, New Work from Blek le Rat**



941 Geary is pleased to present *60/30*, a new collection of works by Blek le Rat, the French artist credited as the Godfather of stencil art. The exhibition will be the largest show Blek has put on, and one of the most historically significant the street art community has seen. There is an opening reception on Saturday, November 19, 2011 from 6-9 pm. The exhibition is free and open to the public for viewing through January 7th, 2012.

60/30 marks the 60th birthday of the prominent artist, Blek le Rat and the 30th anniversary of the birth of his art, which he has continuously created, never taking a

period of leave from his life as an artist. Blek le Rat is a pioneer of street art, whose innovative spirit paved the way for all subsequent street artists who have, and continue to, follow in his path.

The rise of street art has been seen internationally, gaining a fame and importance that many of its first followers could have never expected. Cities all over the world (San Francisco, New York, Melbourne, Berlin, Buenos Aires, London, Beijing and many, many more) are happy hosts to its vibrant and dynamic appeal. Thirty years ago, when Blek le Rat first started to paint his local streets, this was certainly not the case. Unaware of the eventual prominence his style would gain and motivated by the idea of using art to spread ideas of social consciousness, Blek's first major move was the flooding of Paris with his signature piece, the silhouette of a rat. These vermin spread from the subways of the Périphérique to alleyways of Montmartre and could be seen all throughout the city and soon thereafter, in surrounding cities as well. The travelling plague was a warning and also a call to awareness- rats are one of the last wild animals that thrive in the city, and even though they may not be seen rest assured- the city is filled with them. "It is about uprising, a signal of rebellion. It's our revolution," Blek once explained in an interview.

Blek recognized the great ability of street art to address the populace in ways other art could not. Through stencils often centered on social observation, Blek involved his viewers in a guerrilla war against complacency and conformity, highlighting the strength of the individual and inspiring a reflection upon the status quo. The guerrilla art we are familiar with now has much to thank Blek le Rat for, a point driven home with impact when looking at the work of notorious British-graffiti artist Banksy, whose style is not only based on that of Blek but whose subject matter (including soldiers, rebels and even rats taking over the streets) is inarguably influenced by Blek as well.

With no special theme, *60/30* intends to be a remastered compilation of thirty years of the art and life of Blek le Rat. The mostly larger canvases (although there will be a few smaller formats as well) talk about the people, art and events that have shaped Blek's life. One such event is the student riots of May 1968, referenced in a large painting depicting the horse students had brought to the University of Nanterre, a political event that impressed the then 16 year old Blek. The works in the exhibition depict a variety of street arts from tango dancers to street musicians, as well as rats (the anagram of art) and ordinary people from the streets of San Francisco, the city which impressed him from his first visit in the early 70s and welcomed him like no other city in the world. Also included will be collaborations with UK-artist Hush, editions of newly published *Blek le Rat: The 30 Year Anniversary Retrospective* and of course the show wouldn't be complete without canvases referring to his family and the old masters: revisited versions of da Vinci's *Last Supper*, Veronese's *Wedding At Cana* or the now iconic *David with Kalashnikoff* inspired by Michelangelo.

"My stencils are a present, introducing people to the world of art, loaded with a political message. This movement is the democratisation of art: if the people cannot come to the gallery, we bring the gallery to the people!" –Blek le Rat

"Every time I think I've painted something slightly original, I find out that Blek Le Rat has done it as well, only twenty years earlier."- Banksy

Born Xavier Prou in 1951, Prou lives in Paris.

Established in 2010 in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco, 941 Geary is an innovative exhibition space housed in a 3,000 square foot converted warehouse. 941 Geary highlights the works of internationally recognized contemporary artists and provides them with a space in which to activate the projects, installations, and exhibitions that push the boundaries of their own creative practice. Building on the success of White Walls and Shooting Gallery, curator Justin Giarla dedicates this exhibition space as a gift to San Francisco, offering its programming to the local and global arts venue as a way to engage in a cross-cultural dialogue and present 941 Geary as the flagship gallery of the Urban Contemporary genre.

Media Opportunities:

Interview with artist Blek le Rat
Interview with owner/founder/curator Justin Giarla
High-resolution images available upon request

Event Information:

60/30, New Work By Blek le Rat

Opening Reception – November 19th, 2011, 6-9 pm
On View Through January 7th, 2012
@ 941 Geary (www.941geary.com)
941 Geary St,
San Francisco, CA