

Josh Kline

Civil War

4 October – 13 November 2017

Private View: 3 October, 6-8pm

Modern Art are pleased to announce a solo exhibition by the American artist Josh Kline entitled *Civil War*, comprising a major new body of work. *Civil War* builds upon Kline's ongoing project *Unemployment*, made and exhibited throughout the past several years, which responds to structural socio-political and economic changes in the United States during recent times. The exhibition includes a large-scale installation of cast sculptures that appear as concrete 'rubble piles', as well as a new short film set in present-day America while being reminiscent of the history of the Confederacy.

Josh Kline was born in Philadelphia, PA, USA, in 1979, and he lives and works in New York City. Recent solo exhibitions of his work have taken place at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2016); Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR (2016); 47 Canal, New York City, NY (2016); and Modern Art Oxford, Oxford (2015). Kline has been included in groups shows such as *Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection*, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City, NY (2016); the *Fellbach Small Sculpture Triennial*, Fellbach (2016); *9<sup>th</sup> Berlin Biennale*, Berlin (2016); *Life Itself*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2016); *Suspended Animation*, Hirschorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. (2016); *America is Hard to See*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2015); *Overtime: The Art of Work*, Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2015); *2015 Triennial: Surround Audience*, New Museum, New York City, NY (2015); *Looking Back/The 9th White Columns Annual*, White Columns, New York City, NY (2015); *ICA@50: Pleasing Artists And Publics Since 1963*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA (2014); *Speculations on Anonymous Materials*, Fridericianum, Kassel (2013); and *New Pictures of Common Objects*, MoMA/PS1, Long Island City, NY, USA (2012).

For further information, please contact Modern Art.

## CIVIL WAR

Welcome to another all too near future. It could be a decade and a half from now. It could be next year. America and its middle-classes – working, lower, middle, and upper – have crumbled into rubble in an incomprehensibly vicious second civil war. A sequel. Part 2. From coast to coast, the Americans are nowhere to be seen. Always outnumbered by their things, dwarfed by the products that surround them, it's difficult to identify any human survivors hiding in the devastation. The nation has thrown itself in the trash, but America's "stuff" remains behind. In altered forms. Like a mountain's precious metallic ore scattered in the wind as rusting automobile dust.

On a graph, we can plot our trip forward through time towards this doomed day after tomorrow. Connect the charred dots. In mid-1960s America, a conservative backlash against the counterculture rose up off the grid's X-axis. Described by a gently rising slope at its beginning, this reactionary trend line became an ever harsher, ever crueler curve as it traveled through points called Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and Newt Gingrich. The lines connecting those dots on a graph were called the Southern strategy, trickle-down economics, neoliberalism, financial deregulation, family values, and the war on drugs. All twisted euphemisms for a massive transfer of wealth to America's economic elite and the scapegoating of people of color. Passing through George W. Bush and 9/11, the rising conservative curve blasted off at a steep angle – away from the real world and up into a zone of truly mountainous lies. By the time the Trump Administration plops down as a gold-encrusted point on the grid, this curve – which describes the adoption, by millions of people, of an alternative reality cooked up out of alternative facts – has become a vertical tower of fetid burning methane reaching into the clouds. Neoliberalism is a war on reality. A warhead is in the air. Where is it heading?

Democracy can't grow in poverty. Tolerance can't take root in despair. In the aftermath of the Great Depression and two world wars, two generations of the West's best and brightest went on a deep dive into the causes and effects of fascism, fake news, unrestrained free markets, and income inequality. None of this knowledge is a state secret or hidden away in some CIA UFO base under the Nevada desert. Mass unemployment and extreme income inequality in a nation with no safety-nets leads to civil disintegration. Democracy becomes brittle when enough people in a population get desperate. Civil self-immolation.

The American dream is a myth about the country's middle-class. An equal opportunity fantasy of hard work and consumer rewards. Americans define themselves through the things they want or don't want, the things they own, and the things they can't afford. Class divisions often express themselves through consumer goods and experiences. A flip-phone for the poor and an \$800 Vitamix blender for the rich. Lifestyles. Like people all over the world, Americans can look on the Internet and see all the things they're not allowed to have. The phone, the car, the house, the job, the toys, the health care, the education, the children, the life. Desperate inadequacy, failure, debt, and political lies about victimhood – toxic lighter fluid poured on a society moving away from work as we've known it. Aware of all this, America's cynical ruling elite are like a landlord who burns their own apartment building down to get the insurance money and sell the newly vacant lot.

The United States is slowly heating up on the stove. Who will take the lid off when the pot's ready to boil over? A 21st century American civil war won't be like its 19th century *War Between the States*. It will take place everywhere and all at once. The remnants of the working class pitted against the remnants of the middle class pitted against the rich. Poor and middle-class whites against poor blacks and Latinos. Old men against women of all ages. College graduates against the diseducated. People with jobs against people whose jobs are now performed by software. City versus suburb versus countryside. All bound together with bubblegum, sticky-tape, and gunpowder.

But it hasn't happened yet. It's still 2017. The country hasn't burned.

Welcome to another near future. America is a majority minority country in 2043. A nation at peace with the world and with itself. A new voting majority – whose identity is based on diversity, inclusion, and tolerance – has come into its own. They are building an expansive table and providing enough seats for everyone. Truth and reconciliation has come to the land formerly known as the USA. Reparations. The war on the poor has been replaced by a war on poverty. A generous universal basic income has become law and high-quality free health insurance has become a constitutional right. White supremacy is receding because everyone is enjoying their lives. Starved of votes, money, and media attention, the most dangerous organization in the world has withered into an inconsequential right-wing fringe group – "small enough to drown in a bathtub" and easily monitored by the nation's law enforcement agencies. What happened to the Americans? Change and hope.