

Skarstedt presents Mike Kelley: *Reconstructed History*, an exhibition featuring Kelley's ink and collage works on paper created in 1989, offering new insights into a lesser-explored area of the artist's diverse oeuvre. The exhibition will feature the original 50 illustrations from Kelley's *Reconstructed History* series and will be on view at Skarstedt (550 W. 21st Street) from September 11 through October 25, 2014.

In *Reconstructed History*, Kelley imitated how tomorrow's leaders of society—the next generation—make their mark on the past through the act of defacing textbooks with doodles and notations—signifying their own 'reconstruction' while moving towards the future. In keeping with his conceptual practice and predilection towards using non-art objects as material, Kelley explored the found textbook as medium. He mined yard sales for used American History textbooks and graffitied over their pages. Perverse scribbles of lewd comments and gestures enliven the repressed nature of these seemingly heroic and historic images.

Utilizing the vernacular of scholarly tomes and creating interventions on their pages, Kelley challenged traditional attitudes towards history and education and questions the societal and cultural values usually ascribed to these subjects. This series of works prompts us to reconsider the way history books communicate the stories of our predecessors to our successors, investigating the re-appropriation of meaning through the interpretation of the past. Through this lens, once bland textbook titles become ironic ('A Record of Our Country', 'History for Young Citizens'). Kelley wrote, "The past is where these things belong—adored but not emulated."

The works in the exhibition were famously compiled into a limited edition catalogue published in 1990, titled *Mike Kelley: Minor Histories, Statements, Conversations, Proposals*. Printed in script on faux parchment, Kelley's introduction to the catalogue duplicitously recalls the colonial era in its typeface and scholastic tone. Editor John C. Welchman explains, "The images are not 'found' but made. The result is an elaborate hoax, one of the more vivid of Kelley's many efforts to perform, write, and represent through fictitious adopted personae."

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