

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

MURDERED OUT

Christopher Wool, Mike Kelley, Cady Noland, Richard Prince

September 12 - October 19, 2013

Preview and Reception: Thursday, September 12, 6-8pm

Skarstedt Gallery is pleased to present *Murdered Out*, a group show which explores the dark underbelly of the American psyche as represented by Christopher Wool, Mike Kelley, Cady Noland, and Richard Prince. Inspired by the urban slang term, *Murdered Out* refers to a roguish car covered in matte black paint from roof to rim; the works in this exhibition examine American culture through a masked, or metaphorically “blackened-out” lens.

Cady Noland’s *Chicken in a Basket* channels the violent foundations of American history via signs of confinement sprinkled with wry wit and humor. An assemblage of branded and anonymous objects - a rubber chicken, beer cans, turkey baster, American flags, and a cross wrench - Noland’s work is both tragic as well as sardonic. Part time capsule and part trash heap, *Chicken in a Basket* probes and symbolizes the American dream. Similarly, in *Untitled (Walker)*, Noland invites several art-historical and cultural allusions, including the industrial materials of Minimalism and the appropriation of the American flag. As Jasper Johns famously did in the 1960’s, Noland points to the iconic status of the American flag as she drapes it on an orthopedic walker. Limply hanging from the walker’s highest bar, Noland questions the conventions and implications of what the American flag represents.

Just as Noland alludes to themes of violence, car culture, consumerism, and patriotism in her work, Richard Prince depicts this in his Gang series. In *Live Free or Die*, Prince combines nine unrelated images from magazines of scantily clad women on motorcycles. Indulging niche subcultures of “sex, drugs, and rock’n’roll,” Prince is also dispassionately commenting on them.

Like the murdered out car, both intriguing and unattainable, Christopher Wool’s *Untitled (And If You Can’t...)* is at once explicit in text and ambiguous in meaning. Emerging in the 1980s, amidst New York City’s surge in crime, Wool’s word series reflects the urban grit and the violence of the time. An all-over composition, *Untitled (And If You Can’t...)* compounds a stark contrast of foreground and background with a seemingly hostile de-contextualized statement. Difficult to decipher, the broken words are incorporated onto a grid-like system forcing the reader to decode meaning, which is both authoritative and subversive.

Mike Kelley’s *Ahh Youth...* is a visual “black nostalgia.” Subverting contemporary modes of appropriation and minimalism, this assemblage is composed of seven panels of smiling stuffed animals, and one panel displaying Kelley’s yearbook photo. The artist’s disgruntled self-portrait interrupts the sequence of lighthearted stuffed animals, creating a sense of alienation and isolation. Referring to *Ahh Youth...*, the artist comments:

... a kind of black nostalgia, and by that I mean something akin to black humor. I am not 'going back' to reclaim some longed-for positive experience from my youth, but to reexamine, from an adult point of view, some aesthetic experience that I feel I was unable to understand at that time ...¹

¹ M. Kelley, quoted in "Black Nostalgia. An Interview with Mike Kelley by Daniel Kothenschulte," in D. Kothenschulte (ed.), *Mike Kelley, Peter Fischli, David Weiss*, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2000, p.30.