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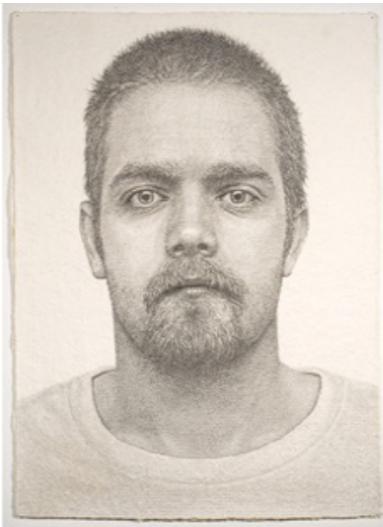
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# BEN DURHAM

## TEXT PORTRAITS

**JANUARY 7 – FEBRUARY 19, 2011**

OPENING RECEPTION: JANUARY 7, 6–8PM



*Robert*, 2010  
graphite text on handmade paper  
58 x 44 x .75 inches  
147.3 x 111.8 x 1.9 centimeters

Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery and Marc Selwyn Fine Art are pleased to present *Ben Durham: Text Portraits*, the artist's first solo exhibition in New York and Los Angeles. The exhibition will be on view simultaneously at the galleries, January through February, 2011.

The subjects of Durham's portraits are friends, classmates and acquaintances from his childhood in Lexington, Kentucky. In a ritualistic daily process, the artist combs the Lexington police reports for familiar names and faces, collecting their mug shots and arrest records. Ranging from petty theft to violent crime, these records represent the climax of a troubled past.

The exhibitions feature three series, *Text Portraits*, *Map Diptychs* and *Map Composites*. Drawn on thick handmade paper, the Text Portraits are comprised of Durham's memories of the subject, resulting in an eerily accurate picture composed entirely of text. Durham's writing is densely layered at times, wearing away the paper's surface to depict shadows, hair and eyes, while light cheeks and shoulders remain legible. In the *Map Diptychs*, lines representing the streets where the subject has lived repeat over each segment, acting as a kind of topographic skeleton underlying the subject's silhouette on one side of the diptych, and on the other as an abstract diagram, "dyed blue, like a tattoo or a vein." As Durham writes, "The map image loosely forms the silhouette of the portrait just as the portrait is indelibly marked by the map... a diagram of a life marked on the skin." For the *Map Composites*, dyed paper is sliced along the street grids of specific neighborhoods relating to each subject. These pieces are reconfigured and arranged to form a silhouette of the subject's mug shot, creating "new combined streets and territories... a personal topography built of many maps." In all three series, paper, used as sculptural material, creates conceptual parallels between modes of representation.

Extremely tactile and obsessively worked, Durham's mark-making is a thorough and meditative exercise. Tracing his subjects' footsteps while grasping at passing recollections, Durham's investigative process is an attempt to reconstruct history through personal memory. Unarchiving narrative through the physical act of drawing, Durham reveals a more complete portrait, a complex history built from fact and reflection.

Ben Durham lives and works in Midway, KY. He received a B.F.A. in Painting at Washington University in St. Louis. Durham's work has been included in exhibitions at Country Club, Cincinnati, OH, the 21C Museum, Louisville, KY. His work is in several private and public collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art.