



**NICOLE KLAGSBRUN**

532 WEST 24TH STREET  
NEW YORK NEW YORK 10011  
212.243.3335  
NICOLEKLAGSBRUN.COM



# BEN DURHAM

## PORTRAITS, MAPS, TEXTS

### APRIL 12 - MAY 18, 2013

OPENING RECEPTION: APRIL 12, 6-8PM

**PERFORMANCE BY BEN DURHAM AND ROBERT BEATTY**  
SATURDAY, MAY 11, 6-8 PM

Nicole Klagsbrun is pleased to present *Portraits, Maps, Texts*, Ben Durham's second solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from April 12 – May 18, 2013. In a series of drawings and sculptures, the artist analyzes cultural and visual systems of identity and place through his explorations of childhood memory and crime.

Mug shots of childhood friends and classmates are the source material for Durham's *Text Portraits*, an ongoing series begun in 2003. Culled daily from an online database, the subjects have been arrested for a range of violations, from unpaid fines to murder. Durham has had no contact with his subjects since childhood and his work reflects this tenuous connection to the past. His appropriation and hyperrealistic recreation of their mug shots encourages an alternate engagement with the subjects as the image is transposed with written memory. Each portrait is drawn entirely with hand-written text that recounts everything the artist can remember about the subject. As marks are repeatedly layered to build the tonal features of the face, the majority of the content is rendered illegible. The yielding texture of handmade paper tears under the force of the pencil and words are lost among the palimpsest of information.

Durham's *Map Silhouettes* subvert the cultural affiliations and historical values ingrained in the traditional function of stained glass. Acting as both portrait and map, these works inextricably bind identity with place. Lead lines weave through the glass to delineate the contour of the subject's mug shot while tracing the streets where they lived and were arrested. A single luminous pane of red glass denotes the location of confrontation where the arrest was made or the crime was committed. Durham's *Map Silhouettes* stand as difficult yet beautiful symbols of people and places marked by crime. They are portraits drained of representation and maps without landmarks or street names, their functions of recognition and orientation stripped away.

Durham's collaborative sound performance with artist and musician Robert Beatty will be presented at Nicole Klagsbrun on May 11, 2013 from 6-8pm, followed by a reception with the artist. Working with cassette tape recordings of Durham dictating the text from his portraits, Beatty will create a live processed sound improvisation while the artist recites the text in front of the audience. Beatty's extensive manipulation of the tape and treatment of the recorded voice as pure sound re-imagines how we transmit and receive information and what we lose in the process. Just as the *Text Portraits* are constructed layer upon layer out of written text, the artist's voice becomes buried under its own sound, creating an experience where narrative is examined yet obscured.

Durham's work has been exhibited in institutions such as the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, and the 21c Museum in Louisville, KY, and is in several private and public collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, the Hammer Museum, CA, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, VA. Durham was born in Lexington, KY and lives and works in Richmond, VA.