

SKYLAR FEIN

*Two Thousand Words For Students,
Artists, Workers, Owners And Everybody*

2 October – 25 October 2019

PRESS RELEASE

2 October 2019 (New Orleans, LA) **JONATHAN FERRARA GALLERY** is proud to announce, *Two Thousand Words For Students, Artists, Workers, Owners, and Everybody*, an exhibition of the latest two- and three-dimensional work by New Orleans-based artist Skylar Fein. Underlying this particular body of work is a pronounced and thought-provoking critique of global political and religious institutions that have shaped our nations' framework and continue to influence policy makers. Stylistically, this exhibition maintains Fein's trademark combination of Pop sensibility and political conscience. A theme that emerges in this body of work, and which has remained constant throughout Fein's career, is a tribute to various forms of nonviolent resistance. The exhibition will be on view from 2 October through 25 October 2019 with an opening reception coinciding with the Arts District of New Orleans' (ADNO) First Saturday Gallery Openings on Saturday, 5 October from 6-9 pm.

"Everything calls out to us, clamoring to be totally transformed, but everyone pretends not to notice"--and here it is, the clamor.

This is a show about words, and the pieces talk to each other, talk over each other, and joke with each other. Mostly they get along.

The quote above--"Everything calls out to us"--is from Franklin Rosemont, the Chicago Surrealist, and he makes a few appearances, especially in the large grey flag. Roy Cohn, architect of the Red Scare and a lifelong enemy of gay rights, shows up twice. ("Admit nothing, deny everything, make counter accusations!" was Cohn's summation of his own legal strategy.) Maurice Blanchot, an obscure French philosopher who devoted his life to unpopular causes, can be found here and there. Blanchot's best work must be "The Refusal," a short essay about a citizen's duty to disobey its own government, and excerpts from that essay appear in the piece "The Red Sentences."

A little bit about Blanchot: in Nazi-occupied France, he was stood up against a wall by the Gestapo and readied for execution. He made a daring escape, and from that moment on, Blanchot--a right-winger and occasional anti-Semite--became a champion of the marginal, the persecuted, the dispossessed. Politically he was on the right, then on the left, then on the right again, sometimes a communist, always an antifascist. In Blanchot I see a model free thinker, unafraid, unconcerned with popularity, devoted to moral force alone. He seems to embody the spirit of the early-Twentieth Century working-class intellectual, an ideological combatant who could refine his ideas continuously, who wasn't afraid to be wrong, and above all, who wasn't a believer but a seeker. I see myself in him--or want to. Where is Blanchot today? Who are his heirs? The future belongs to those who can hold two contradictory ideas in their heads at the same time.

SKYLAR FEIN was born in Greenwich Village and raised in the Bronx. He has had many careers including teaching nonviolent resistance under the umbrella of the Quakers, working for a gay film festival in Seattle, stringing for The New York Times and as pre-med student at University of New Orleans where he moved one week before Hurricane Katrina hit.

In the wreckage of New Orleans, Fein found his new calling as an artist, experimenting with color and composition of the detritus of Katrina. His work soon became known for its pop sensibility as well as its hard-nosed politics. After a few starring roles in group shows, he had his first solo show in May 2008 at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery in New Orleans.

In the fall of 2008, his Prospect.1: Biennial installation, "Remember the Upstairs Lounge," shined a spotlight on an overlooked piece of New Orleans history: a fire that swept through a French Quarter bar in 1973, killing everyone inside. The worst fire in New Orleans history has never been solved. His installation walked visitors right through the swinging bar doors, and offered visual riffs on politics and sexuality circa 1973.

The piece was praised in ArtForum, Art In America, The New York Times Magazine and The New Yorker, among others. In late 2009, Fein had his first solo museum show, "Youth Manifesto," at the New Orleans Museum of Art. The exhibition was

an ode to punk rock as a force for social and cultural upheaval. True to form, the opening reception was shut down by police responding to the look of the unlikely art-going crowd.

In March 2010, Jonathan Ferrara Gallery presented Fein's solo installation, "Skylar Fein: Rise of the Youth Front" at VOLTA Art Fair in New York during Armory Week. This installation drew thousands of people and delved into revolutionary politics past and present, a continuing theme in Fein's work. In May 2010, Fein was invited by the New York curatorial project No Longer Empty to recreate his "Remember the Upstairs Lounge" installation in a vacant Chelsea space. The exhibition, once again, drew thousands of visitors and sparked renewed interest in this piece of history. In September 2011, Fein exhibited over eighty new works in his solo exhibition Junk Shot at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans. This exhibition embodied this artist's turn towards formalism and art historical reference while maintaining Fein's iconic sensibilities and aesthetic. Fein's solo exhibition "Beckett at War" in September 2012 at C24 Gallery in Chelsea was praised by The Village Voice as one of the top ten exhibitions of the year in New York. He then followed up with his November 2013 installation of "The Lincoln Bedroom" which received wide media attention. Fein unveiled his "Giant Metal Matchbook" series in his 2014 solo exhibition at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery and exhibited another, larger suite of these acclaimed sculptures in a solo exhibition at the gallery in 2015 and VOLTA NY 2016. Since then, the series has been exhibited nationally at art fairs such as, Art Miami, Miami Project, Art on Paper NYC, Seattle Art Fair, Texas Contemporary, and Art Market San Francisco. He continues to exhibit nationally as part of the Guns in the Hands of Artists exhibition (Washington D.C., St. Louis, Minneapolis, Miami, Fairfield, CT and Aspen), and has an exhibition of his photography forthcoming in Houston.

For more information, press or sales inquiries please contact Gallery Director Matthew Weldon Showman at 504.343.6827 or matthew@jonathanferragallery.com. Please join the conversation with JFG on Facebook ([@JonathanFerraraGallery](#)), Twitter ([@JFerraraGallery](#)), and Instagram ([@JonathanFerraraGallery](#)) via the hashtags: #SkylarFein, #JonathanFerraraGallery and #ArtsDistrictNewOrleans.