

SKYLAR FEIN

Strike Anywhere

new giant metal matchbooks

with special presentation :::

SKYLAR FEIN x MRSA - *Children of the Night*



1 April – 30 May 2015

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JONATHAN FERRARA GALLERY is proud to announce, ***Strike Anywhere***, an exhibition of the latest work by artist **SKYLAR FEIN** in his ongoing 'Giant Metal Matchbook' series. The exhibition will also feature a special presentation of the artist's collaboration with New Orleans street artist **MRSA** entitled *Children of the Night*. The exhibition will be on view Wednesday **1 April** through **30 May 2015**. The gallery will host first Saturday **artist receptions** on **4 April** and **2 May** from **6-9pm**.

Fein is best known for his large-scale installations, including *Remember the Upstairs Lounge*, an exhibit during Prospect.1 that threw a spotlight on a little-known chapter of history. The 1973 arson fire at a gay bar in the French Quarter is still the deadliest attack against gay people on record. But here, in *Strike Anywhere*, the Bronx-born artist turns to something on a more intimate level.

Fein says of the 'Giant Metal Matchbooks' series...

Why matchbooks? It reflects the artist's love of pop culture, its vibrancy and also its accidental depth and poignancy. "A common object is a perfect meeting place." That's a Claes Oldenburg quote, and it's still true—the most banal objects, aren't.

Obviously Claes Oldenburg's giant sculptures are forerunners, along with a dash of Warhol's Brillo boxes and a side of "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids." The aluminum matchbooks open up, revealing—yes, giant wooden matches, with realistic (rubber) match heads.

Do they light? Not exactly. But they burn.

'Children of the Night' is a collaboration between Fein and New Orleans street artist MRSA, member of several local graffiti crews including: *Young Rectums*, *Tweenz Kult*, and *Illegal Trouble*. The two artists have actually worked together for years, but this is their first outing of any kind on a gallery wall. Here they make wood reliefs that run from mythic and figurative to formal and starkly abstract. The work reflects MRSA's interest in the "fantastical" with content from "all persuasions of mythology -- Greek, Christian, Roman, Nordic and more." In his graffiti, he starts with myth, then "adds chaos to disrupt the known patterns." The mash up between the graffiti artist's oddly classical inspiration and the studio artist's oddball-outsider methodology is a pleasing one, and we expect this brief experiment to yield more fruit with time.

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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. Since then, the series has been exhibited nationally at art fairs such as, Miami Project for Art Basel Miami Beach, Texas Contemporary, and artMRKT San Francisco, and has continued to gain momentum in rave reviews and collector acquisitions.

Skylar Fein was the recipient of a 2009 Joan Mitchell Foundation Award and his work is in several prominent collections including The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Brooklyn Museum, The Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, The Louisiana State Museum, The Birmingham Museum of Art, the New Orleans Museum of Art, curators Dan Cameron and Bill Arning, and collectors Beth Rudin DeWoody, Lance Armstrong, Lawrence Benenson, Brooke Garber-Neidich, Stephanie Ingrassia and Thomas Coleman.

For more information, press or sales inquiries please contact gallery director, Matthew Weldon Showman, at matthew@jonathanferraragallery.com.



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