

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MIKE KELLEY**  
**SHAPED PAINTINGS**  
**APRIL 21 – JUNE 25, 2016**

**OPENING RECEPTION:**  
**THURSDAY, April 21, 6-8 PM**  
**550 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street**



Skarstedt is pleased to present an exhibition of Mike Kelley's shaped paintings, never before seen as a group, at its Chelsea gallery. Dating from the early to mid-1990s, this body of work demonstrates his return to the medium following a 15-year span of performance, multimedia and installation art. Deconstructing the canon of modernist color and composition, these paintings manifest Kelley's psychological road map through images recovered from his memory. *Mike Kelley: Shaped Paintings* will be on view at Skarstedt (550 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street) from Thursday, April 21 to Saturday, June 25, 2016.

A source of Kelley's rebellion was his formal art training at the University of Michigan, which emphasized the philosophy of Abstract Expressionism. Reflecting on his time at school, Kelley stated: "My education must have been a form of mental abuse, of brainwashing."<sup>1</sup> Kelley explored "screen memories" in his shaped paintings, delving deep into his unconscious to recover and identify the repressed memories of his trauma.

For *The Thirteen Seasons* series, Kelley created an oval-shaped painting on wood for each month of the year. Meant to resemble his student work, the paintings come to terms with influences of his art education, focusing on elements of Hans Hofmann's "push-pull" theory, in addition to typically expressive techniques, such as finger painting. Childlike illustrations, such as jack-o-lanterns and cartoon animals, reveal Kelley's memories, unrestrained by conventional composition.

The final work of the series, *The Thirteen Seasons (Heavy on the Winter) #13: Art* represents the month that doesn't appear on the calendar. Kelley employed a wood grain *trompe l'oeil* technique to the surface, suggesting that the appearance of wood is effectively permanent through painting. Here, Kelley offers a reminder that art belongs to the thirteenth season, of memory, one that is independent of the calendar's rhythm and preserves its existence throughout time.<sup>2</sup>

Kelley revisits his troubled youth in *Prenatal Mutual Recognition of Betty and Barney Hill*, which was originally exhibited at Metro Pictures in 1995 as part of the *Timeless Paintings* series. This exhibition presented paintings along with architectural models of Kelley's schools, the designated sites of Kelley's abuse. Echoing *The Thirteen Seasons*, portraits of a boy and girl float aimlessly above

---

<sup>1</sup> E. Meyer-Hermann, L. Gabrielle Mark, *Mike Kelley*, Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum, 2013, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> E. Fontana, *Mike Kelley: Memory Ware, Wood Grain, Carpet*, JRP Ringier, 2005.

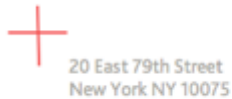
---

# SKARSTEDT

Hofmann-like geometric forms in the irregularly shaped composition. *Untwisted Cross* follows a similar pattern of regression to childhood in its coarse sketch of a skull among blocks of color. As a diverse group, Kelley's shaped paintings draw focus to his unique approach to painting and critically inform the rest of the artist's oeuvre.

Image Credit: Mike Kelley, *The Thirteen Seasons (Heavy on the Winter)#6: Fall*, 1994, acrylic on wood, 62 1/2 x 40 inches (158.8 x 101.6 cm.) Art © Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts. All Rights Reserved/Licensed by VAGA New York, NY. Courtesy Skarstedt, New York.

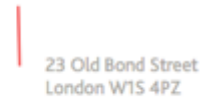
## About Skarstedt



20 East 79th Street  
New York NY 10075



550 West 21st Street  
New York NY 10011



23 Old Bond Street  
London W1S 4PZ

Skarstedt (20 E. 79<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY) was founded in 1994 by Per Skarstedt to mount historical exhibitions by Contemporary European and American artists that had become the core of his specialty in Sweden and New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The New York gallery's program focuses on artists of the late Twentieth Century whose work explores concepts such as representation, authorship, identity, and sexual politics across a wide-range of media. Skarstedt's unique relationship with artists allows it to present exhibitions both on the primary and secondary markets, creating a dialogue between the generations.

Skarstedt opened its London space at 23 Old Bond Street in 2012 with the inaugural exhibition *Andy Warhol: The American Indian*. Skarstedt London presents exhibitions and publications devoted to the gallery's established area of expertise while also seeking to evolve and expand its focus. Skarstedt is committed to sharing both its aesthetic perspective and philosophical approach through high-quality exhibitions and collaborations with top international museums and private collections.

Skarstedt opened its Chelsea space at 550 W. 21<sup>st</sup> Street in May 2014 with the inaugural exhibition *Klein and Warhol: Fire and Oxidation Paintings*, adding to the gallery's existing locations on New York's Upper East Side and in London. The additional gallery space enables Skarstedt to expand on its core program of museum-quality, historically researched exhibitions from modern and contemporary masters.

The gallery works with the following artists and artists' estates: Justin Adian, Francis Bacon, John Baldessari, Georg Baselitz, George Condo, Carroll Dunham, Eric Fischl, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Lucio Fontana, Günther Förg, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Mike Kelley, Martin Kippenberger, Yves Klein, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Robert Mapplethorpe, Juan Muñoz, Cady Noland, Albert Oehlen, Richard Prince, David Salle, Thomas Schütte, Cindy Sherman, Rosemarie Trockel, Andy Warhol, Franz West, and Christopher Wool.

## Media Contact:

Adam Abdalla, Cultural Counsel, [adam@culturalcounsel.com](mailto:adam@culturalcounsel.com), (212) 379-9423