



MIKE KELLEY

Pansy Metal/Clovered Hoof, 1989

April 23 –May 22, 2015

At Carolina Nitsch Project Room
534 West 22nd street, New York

Carolina Nitsch Project Room will feature **Mike Kelley's** *Pansy Metal/Clovered Hoof*, the seminal series of oversized silk banners from 1989. Mike Kelley (1954–2012) is considered one of the most influential artists of our time and created a body of pioneering work that mined American popular culture, modernism and alternative, counter culture movements. His work explores class relations, sexuality, repressed memory, systems of religion and transcendence, and post-punk politics. He brought persistent self and social examination to these themes, which manifested in simultaneously dark and delirious works. His works are sharply critical and often quite self-deprecating.

Pansy Metal/Clovered Hoof appears almost like crude doodles that one would find in the margins of a high school notebook, desk or bathroom wall. However, here they are enlarged to the size of banners like one would see hanging in a gymnasium, as if the outsiders in school decided to showcase the iconography that symbolized their counter-culture. It is a mockery and collision of Irish clovers, male genitalia, skulls and morbid portraiture. The Swastika in one banner is clearly ridiculed and stripped of its power by placing clovers and/or male genitalia on the ends of the lines. *Pansy Metal/Clovered Hoof* was originally conceived of as costumes for a performance which was a collaboration between Mike Kelley and the dancer Anita Pace and performed on a fashion show-style ramp to music by Motörhead. In turn the project also satirized the heavy metal genre, which adopted imagery of skulls, devils, and other mordant iconography. Kelley specifically lampoons Motörhead by repeating their superfluous use of an umlaut over the E's in his own name on one banner with a devils mask.

Born in Detroit, Kelley lived and worked in Los Angeles from the mid-1970s until his tragic death at the age of 57. Throughout his thirty-five year career, he worked in a variety of mediums; drawing, print, sculpture, performance, music, video, photography, and painting. Speaking of his early work and **artistic concerns at large, Kelley had said, "My entrance into the art world was through the counter-culture, where it was common practice to lift material from mass culture and 'pervert' it to reverse or alter its meaning... Mass culture is scrutinized to discover what is hidden, repressed, within it."**

Mike Kelley exhibited extensively throughout the United States and Europe. *Pansy Metal/Clovered Hoof* was restaged at the Stedelijk Museum in 2012 and MOMA PS.1 in 2013 as well as other venues. Kelley has participated in multiple Whitney Biennials, and others held internationally. Mike Kelley was a prolific writer and critic himself, and his work has been featured in multiple publications. A major retrospective exhibition opened at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in 2012 and traveled to MOCA, Los Angeles and MoMA, PS.1 in 2013/14. Mike Kelley lived and worked in Los Angeles.

For further information or images please contact the gallery at 212-645-2030 or email: info@carolinanitsch.com