

# Kevin Charles Kline

*DIG: excavations of information visualized*

January 17 - March 7, 2009



*Art*, 2008.

Buffalo-based multimedia artist Kevin Charles Kline collects discarded books and maps which he cuts apart and reconstructs, revealing the subjective and often absurd nature of their arrangements and generating his own systemization of history based purely upon aesthetic preference. His work examines the manner in which government and education shape and control our views and seeks to disrupt these conventions by suggesting that no one book, image, or individual's account can ever impartially describe history.

Kline acquires educational books on topics such as art history, geography,

and religion and, without predetermining which images to save, cuts through the covers page by page to expose select pictures inside. Working within the parameters inherent in the act of cutting (by choosing to keep one image, he consequently rules out the discovery of others hidden on subsequent pages), Kline relies on a balance of naïveté and artistic choice to produce collages that reveal the arbitrariness of the books' orderings. By setting rules for himself, such as cutting out text, real-life human faces, and illustrations and leaving only photography-based images, he eradicates the identities of the figures and eliminates all references and symbolism, bringing new life to the materials.

In *Art*, for example, Kline juxtaposes images of artworks from divergent movements and time periods in order to disrupt the author's personal interpretation of the historical progression of art and create a pictorial scene which transcends scale and blends history into a single paradoxical moment. Likewise, in *Standard*, by decontextualizing images from a beauty school handbook, Kline cleverly transforms them into strange depictions of torture: scalping, surgery, or bugs being picked from patients' hair. Through the disclosure of racist imagery

found in geography books for children and images of large-breasted women in health manuals undoubtedly designed for male doctors' satisfaction, he seeks to uncover textbooks' biased essence.

Similarly, Kline's reorganization of maps arose from his contemplation of an inevitable reoccurring Pangaea, the oppressive nature of created borders, and the cultural ignorance expressed in our inability to recognize the physical forms of countries we ourselves do not inhabit or frequent. In response, his fashioned landmasses playfully undermine these human-made boundaries by begging such hypothetical questions as "What kinds of foods might evolve if Afghanistan were situated next to Ohio?"

While didactic instruments such as reference books and maps are exalted as objective windows into the world, the accepted values and standards within them are subject to change through time and from one material to the next. Through his "excavations," Kline critically challenges the sacredness and authority of these objects, as well as photography's supposed relationship to knowledge and truth and our irrational proclivity for certain organizational systems over others.

- Cori Wolff, Exhibition Curator



Map, 2008.



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