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**MIKE STILKEY: *WHEN THE ANIMALS REBEL***  
**JUNE 4 – AUGUST 31, 2007**

Closing Luncheon: Thursday, August 30 at noon



*All Out War, 2005*

HOUSTON, Texas, April 27, 2007 – Rice Gallery is pleased to present *When the Animals Rebel*, a new installation by Los Angeles artist Mike Stilkey. It is the fifth installation in Rice Gallery's Summer Window series, which features work that can be viewed through the gallery's front glass wall while the gallery remains closed for the summer. Although no gallery attendant will be on duty, free educational materials will be available. The gallery will be open Thursday, August 30 when the artist will give a gallery talk, at noon. A complimentary light lunch will be served to all who attend. For more information, please visit [www.ricegallery.org](http://www.ricegallery.org), or call 713.348.6169.

**Rice Gallery is closed during the summer. The Summer Window installation is visible only through the gallery's front window during regular building hours: Monday through Saturday, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm.**

Mike Stilkey looks to his imagination to create his whimsical, yet poignant, portraits of animals and people. Trained as a photographer, he began to draw obsessively at age twenty and now works almost exclusively with pen and ink, watercolor or pencil. Stilkey's signature elongated, fragile-looking characters include humans and a repertoire of humanized animals – boxing giraffes, pensive pigeons, tiny horses, and fat cats. His depictions of world-weary men and women have an aura of decadence and eroticism associated with the cabaret of 1920s Berlin. Stilkey's spindly, contour-lined figures are often compared to works by German expressionist painter Otto Dix (1891-1969) one of the main artists associated with that scene, though remarkably, Stilkey did not study art history and had never heard of the artist. Dix's stylized portraits of "glitter and doom" are at once beautiful and brutal in their frank portrayal of human weaknesses; likewise, both compassion and the brokenness of the human condition can be seen in Stilkey's characters, all of whom are sad, he says, because "they know too much."

Stilkey's empathy extends to objects grown beautiful with age or use, and he is a passionate collector of old records, cameras, and especially books, to which he is attracted, ". . . sometimes by the title, or more the look of it, the antiqueness of it, or the wear and tear of it. Sometimes there's a weird illustration. I've got these books and I'll never read them, but I want them for some reason and I've never known why. And then I started drawing on them." Over the past several years the artist has purchased books at thrift stores and yard sales, and has started to use them in his work in lieu of paper. In 2004, he published *One Hundred Portraits*, an artist book featuring portraits painted on the pages of books. After completing *Portraits*, Stilkey decided to paint on books' covers and spines as well. By stacking books on their sides and using the spines as one large surface area, the work becomes both painting and sculpture.

Stilkey's Summer Window installation, *When the Animals Rebel*, will incorporate thousands of old books arranged against a massive 16 x 44 foot wall built directly behind Rice Gallery's glass façade. The work's components, a combination of stacked books and books whose pages are laid flat against the wall, will range in height from six to twelve feet. Stilkey will draw and paint across the entire surface to create a vast, imaginary cityscape whose characters – horses, trees, people, clouds, cats, etc. – will be occupied

with the various activities of city life such as driving cars, riding bikes, and walking. A largely black and white panorama interspersed with color, *When the Animals Rebel* will be, says Stilkey, "a melancholic and absurd depiction of their world." Stilkey recently exhibited his first book sculpture and was amazed at viewers' reactions to seeing old books used as a painting surface. "Everyone who saw the book sculpture wanted to touch it," says Stilkey. "There was something magical about what it was on, almost more so than the painting. A large scale will be pretty intense, visually, and I'm sure it's going to smell like an old bookstore!"

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Mike Stilkey was born in Los Angeles, California in 1975 and received an Associate Degree from Santa Monica City College in 1997. Stilkey's work has appeared in numerous group shows in Los Angeles, including BLK/MRKT Gallery, Curio 69 Gallery, Artpiece Gallery, and Gallery 1988. His work has been commissioned by the *L.A. Alternative Press* and has been featured in *Exit Strategy Magazine* as well as the catalogs BLK/MRKT ONE and Paper Pushers. In 2005 Stilkey published *One Hundred Portraits*, an artist book.

### **ADMISSION IS FREE.**

### **SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP**

Rice Gallery exhibitions and programs receive major support from Rice Gallery Patrons and Members, The Brown Foundation, Inc., and the Kilgore Endowment. Exhibition catalogues are funded in part by the Robert J. Card, M.D. and Karol Kreymer Catalogue Endowment. The gallery receives partial operating support from the City of Houston. KUHF-FM and Saint Arnold Brewing Company provide in-kind support.

### **LOCATION AND PARKING**

Rice Gallery is on the ground floor of Sewall Hall, and is reached using Campus Entrance 1 located at the intersection of Main Street and Sunset Boulevard. Paid parking (credit card only; \$3.00 per hour, \$9.00 daily maximum) is available in the Founder's Court Lot directly in front of Sewall Hall. For other parking options visit [www.rice.edu/parking](http://www.rice.edu/parking).

By METRORail: Hermann Park/Rice University Station.

### **WHEELCHAIR ACCESS**

Wheelchair access is on the south (left) side of the building.