

PRESS RELEASE

Kim Jones

RATS LIVE ON NO EVIL STAR

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In his first exhibition at Bridget Donahue, *RATS LIVE ON NO EVIL STAR*, Kim Jones fills the gallery with selections from five decades of sculpture, performance documentation, drawing and painting. Jones's experience as a soldier in the Vietnam War has influenced his artistic production, as well as his experience using leg braces after an illness restricting his ability to walk at the age of seven.

Included in the exhibition is a series of photographs picturing the iconic 1976 *Wilshire Boulevard Walk*, when Jones walked eighteen miles from end to end of Wilshire Boulevard in a costume constructed from sticks, foam rubber and mud. Under the performance persona known as Mudman, Jones strapped the labyrinthine wooden apparatus onto his back and obscured his face with sheer pantyhose. The wearable Mudman structure and headpiece first manifested within the installation *Foam Rubber House* in 1973, a room covered in foam, cotton, nylon, and other materials, before evolving into detachable Icarus-like wings. Influenced by interfamilial star charts from the Marshall Islands, the wooden structure evokes maps of oceanic currents and planetary movement guiding people traveling by canoe, as much as it also reminds of a porcupine's quill. Coated, muddied sticks have emerged and informed other sculptures throughout his oeuvre, such as a "Big Wheel" tricycle incorporating a set of toy figurine soldiers from Jones's childhood.

Since the 1970s, the emblematic star structure has become an imprint on Jones's work, and illustrations of the webbed sculpture continue to appear in his drawings of semi-human, bestial mythological figures. Jones often applies acrylic and pen alterations on top of photographs decades after their capture, layering characters and diagrammatic maps onto ever-changing images. Sometimes referred to as "war drawings", inky aerial mazes look like battleground plans for strategic movement. Jones's drawings gain a vibrancy from constant reworking, retaining the trace of combat while ultimately merged with a folklore depicting the murder of innocence.

Hanging along the exhibition walls are bundled rats fused into sculptures, punctuating the room with recollection of the scavenging animals overrunning the muddied sleeping quarters of Vietnam. Rats were both marginal company, and at other times, grave enemies. Similarly, soldiers lived and fought like rats, a metaphor recurrent in Jones's work. In a return to the title of the exhibition, "RATS LIVE ON NO EVIL STAR - A palindrome on the side of a barn in Ireland.", this phrase finds its origins in *Rat Piece*, in which Jones burned live rats onstage in 1976 at California State University in Los Angeles as a visiting artist during a ritualistic destruction of and tribute to the mud-covered rodent. The title is a contradictory sentiment of survival, decrepit existence, forgiveness, and cleansing. A competing feeling of persistence and refusal can be found in the palindrome, a phrase that reads identically backwards as it does forwards.

Kim Jones (b. 1944, San Bernardino) has been working in performance, sculpture, installation and drawing for over fifty years. His work has been featured in group exhibitions such as the Sydney Biennale; Venice Biennale; Guggenheim Museum, New York; MCA, San Diego; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; MoMA, New York; LACMA, Los Angeles; The Drawing Center, New York; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington. Jones is included in the prominent public collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MoMA, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; LACMA, Los Angeles; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; SFMOMA, San Francisco; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, amongst others.