

Mitchell Syrop*Hidden*

June 6th – July 26th

Mitchell Syrop's work has a basis in the visual shape and discordance of language. In previous works, scrawled words were as stark and assaulting as punk lyrics, yet as interchangeable as the faces in Syrop's well-known high school year-book photo installations of the 1970s and 1980s. Over the past few years, he has begun working in steel, a practice that he had set aside in the 1970s. This exhibition at Midway is the first time that Syrop is presenting a photographic text work alongside his steel sculptures.

While the acts of transcribing and re-photographing have always been a part of his practice, it has been the stream-of-consciousness writing and the highly personal nature of his use of language that has distinguished Syrop's work. Usually brief in nature, he has none-the-less developed a dry distinctive tone in which he plays with language as a material to be modified and questioned. In *Hidden*, one of his lengthiest works to date, a new photographic series of enlarged spiral bound notebook pages portray an elliptical internal monologue. A lament on seeking, finding, recording and storing something that occurred many years ago, the ambiguous "it" that the writer comes back to repeatedly is a struggle with the impossibility of finding something seemingly private, hidden in plain sight. The writer's self-doubt becomes further heightened by the large-scale scroll-like quality of the installation.

The series of steel works on view have a similar ambiguous nature. Using a very direct process of carving and writing into thick plate steel with acetylene and oxygen, these works have a quiet solemnity that alludes to tablets, signs, scrolls and fragmentary reliefs. Yet, read together, their stuttering cut surfaces and deadpan-like humor create a certain psychological tension similar to his writing. Resonating beyond their sheer physicality, they recall a certain invasiveness of an earlier text work of Syrop's that reads "it is not a mark in space / it is a mark in your head / i put it there / i put that mark in your head."

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Mitchell Syrop (b. 1953, Yonkers, NY) lives and works in Los Angeles, where he earned his MFA from CalArts in 1978. Solo exhibitions include those at Thomas Solomon Gallery, Los Angeles; WPA Gallery, Los Angeles; Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles; Spokane Falls College, Spokane; Galeria Oliva Arauna, Madrid; Santa Monica Museum of Art; Lieberman & Saul Gallery, New York; and the Matrix Gallery, University of California, Berkeley. Recent group exhibitions include the California-Pacific Triennial curated by Dan Cameron, The Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach; *On the Line*, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, curated by Cody Trepte; California Video, J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; *Index: Conceptualism in California* from the Permanent Collection, MoCA, Los Angeles; *Good Morning Midnight* curated by Bruce Hainley, Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York; and *Tomorrow Land: A Tribute to CalArts*, MOMA, New York.