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Los Angeles, CA
September 4, 2011

Charlie James Gallery, at 975 Chung King Road, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Presents a Solo Show by Richard Kraft

Something With Birds In It

Dates: September 17 – October 29, 2011

Artist's Reception: Saturday, September 17 from 7-10pm

Charlie James Gallery is delighted to present LA artist Richard Kraft's first solo show in Los Angeles, entitled *Something With Birds In It*. A site-specific installation composed of four elements, *Something With Birds In It* invokes the friction and fluidity between familiar polarities—between the sacred and profane, sense and nonsense, play and violence, reflection and action. Using a variety of media—including photography, drawing, collage, and sculpture—as well as acts of alteration and appropriation, *Something With Birds In It* conjures a visual environment where anticipated meanings are called into question and in which contradictions and nonsense point to other kinds of truths.

At the back of the gallery hang two large-scale photographic portraits that express the acts of looking: one outward, taking in and assessing the world, the other inward, contemplating or even retreating from it. Taken from Kraft's *Tube Portraits* series (inspired by Walker Evans's seminal book of photographs *Many Are Called*), both photographs are stills from video taken surreptitiously on the London Underground. They reveal something unmediated, almost naked, in this very public space in which people sit and wait, en route from one place to another.

Two large grids of drawings and collages flank the photographs on opposite walls, one side with works on white paper, the other with works on black. On white, *Conturbatio* (from the Latin word for agitation and disorder) is driven by contradiction, subversion, an aggressive sense of humor, and various forces of motion: spinning, falling, flying, shooting, pouncing. Lunacy and terror intertwine with rogue soldiers appearing on a field of words collaged into nonsense. Figureheads are radically altered into the ridiculous. Cricket Umpires issue rulings on unseen play. Here the world is deeply physical and the borders between power and powerlessness and meaning and meaningless are permeable.

On the other side, *Nocturne (for R.S.)*, summons the space of the interior mind and imagination, the amorphousness of memory, and the vortex of longing, melancholy, and grief. Inside the grid, tinier grids of dots suggest pinholes through which to view other, unreachable worlds. Bodies, heads, and

objects float, unmoored from the physical world. The sensation of transience and mutability pervades.

100 Walkers: Los Angeles (for Stanley Green) is at center of the room, serving as a fulcrum for the entire installation. In this grid of one hundred 8-inch cast figures in suits and bowler hats, each wears a unique miniature sandwich board, that—subverting a form traditionally associated with advertising and proselytizing—has nothing to sell. Drawing from various visual and verbal lexica, some sandwich boards share imagery with *Conturbatio*, *Nocturne*, and *Tube Portraits*, and create their own collage, connecting disparate pieces of the world. Poised as if to animate at any moment, they might walk out into the world to interrupt the familiar with humor, distortion, and unexpected juxtapositions. This work is also part of the larger *Walkers* series that includes performances in which actual walkers with sandwich boards create startling incongruities in environments as diverse as Hollywood, Death Valley, Speaker's Corner in London, and the Las Vegas Strip.

Richard Kraft grew up in London and lives in Los Angeles. His work has been exhibited in galleries such as L.A. Louver (Venice, CA), Rosamund Felsen (Santa Monica, CA), Greg Kucera (Seattle, WA) and non-profit spaces including the Portland Art Museum, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art (Omaha, NE), the Photographic Resource Center (Boston, MA), among others. He has frequently used public spaces for installations with work appearing on the sides of buses and in library aisles, as well for performances such as at Oxford Circus in London and along the full length of Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. In the summer of 2009, he conducted a series of performances at Speakers' Corner in London and at several rural sites in Scotland and Northern England. Most recently he has embarked on a series of walking performances (for anywhere from one to one hundred walkers) in Los Angeles. Siglio Press will publish an artist's monograph in 2012 and has already released four multiples (*100 Soldiers for a Revolution*, *Untitled: Kapitan Kloss*, *Two Tube Portraits* and *R.S. A Library Portrait*) and has scheduled another for this year.