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ANDREW RAFACZ is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new work by Ben Durham in conjunction with **COUNTRY CLUB**.

Chicago, IL, February 4, 2012 – Andrew Rafacz continues its ongoing collaboration with Los Angeles-based Country Club with *Found Graffiti*, new works on paper and stained glass by Ben Durham in Gallery Two. This is the artist's first exhibition in Chicago. It continues through Saturday, March 17, 2012.

In these two recent bodies of work, graffiti functions as an unofficial language that speaks directly of the people and the places where it was sprayed, scratched, or marked. It is a signature, an identity rendered as logo, and a dispossessed claim, not just of self, but of territory. It is a kind of real-time mapmaking akin to psychogeography in its frustrated attempt to achieve personal, spatial, and cultural orientation.

In the *Graffiti Map* body of work, Durham has collected found graffiti imagery and transcribed them with graphite and ink onto the handmade paper surface. Layered to the point of nearly complete visual saturation and unintelligibility, the drawn graffiti loosely forms the silhouette of a portrait. Related locations from standard city maps are then projected onto the drawing and cut with a razor, creating puzzle-like pieces. Those resulting pieces are spaced slightly apart to create a secondary negative image, the visible white of the matte revealing the grid of streets and neighborhoods. Like architectural supports or internal skeletal systems, this crisscrossing of streets cut across the face of the drawn image visualizes the programmatic structure within our cities, neighborhoods, and selves. Consciously or not, our experience of place is embedded within us. To this end, graffiti acts as a visual memory of the experiential bonds between place and self. Like memory, these marks mapping movement through space begin to fade and are quickly crowded and overwhelmed by others, leaving only traces. In the series, the graffiti of dozens of individuals from dozens of locations concentrate and visualize this purposeful yet transient projection of identity onto place.

For the series of stained glass installations, Durham focused solely upon the graffiti of public bathroom stalls. There the graffiti is typically anonymous, a forum for all that we normally do not say. Statements of belief, sexual desire, and anger are left to be read and responded to, forming an oddly intimate yet public dialogue. Graffiti that has been found particularly offensive is inevitably scratched out and the resulting crude palimpsest forms a transitory history of the people who have shared the space and the social and cultural dynamics of the place itself. The complicated ambivalence of these negated texts is the basis for the stained glass installations. Each scratched out letter of the graffiti text is reformed as a single stained glass panel. Traditionally, the function of stained glass was both architectural and narrative: the projection of light and the conveyance of established cultural history. In this series, Durham explores the idea that stained glass and graffiti similarly function as a public communication of belief and cultural identity. By aestheticizing and amplifying bathroom stall graffiti into large-scale stained glass installations, Durham highlights both this similarity as well as the many conflicts inherent between the two forms. It is not just a subversion of the stained glass form but an attempt to link its beauty and tradition with the people and places revealed in our culture by their graffiti.

BEN DURHAM (American, b. 1982) has exhibited in New York at Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery and in Los Angeles at Marc Selwyn Fine Art. This is his first solo exhibition with Country Club. His work is in the permanent collections of 21c Museum in Louisville, KY, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, the Flag Art Foundation, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. In late 2012, his work will be part of a major exhibition at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC.