

Josh Tonsfeldt

About a Work #11

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About a Work #11

About a Work

Through a dialogue with the art world, with the idea of collaborating for affinity, this project stands as a sequence of artistic statements lasting two weeks each. The recording of these events is designed to grow and develop over time, in an indefinable and perhaps surprising way.

Josh Tonsfeldt: About a work

I often think of a video that Josh shot in winter 2013. It's a four-and-a-half-minute single take that starts with him turning on the camera while sitting in the driver's seat of a truck. The shot opens on a beat-up car mat, then lifts up to the driver's dashboard, and carries on with Josh as he exits the car and walks outside. The camera moves with his body, but not seamlessly. The autofocus heaves back and forth in a largely futile effort to fix the camera's perspective on its surroundings. Moments of sharpness are short. As in so many of his works, the supposed subject—here, a deserted backyard under a light snowfall—becomes less relevant. What draws one's attention to the video is the process: in this case, the animating tension between the camera and its operator.

In the series *About a work*, the earliest photograph of which was shot in 2010, this tension is between composition and chance. Usually, Josh's photographs are part of larger works in which they appear deeply altered—faded, worn down, or absorbed into other materials—or are obscured, placed behind sculptures or, in more recent works, behind optical films. *About a work*, which features unadulterated images, is comparatively straightforward which allows for the subjects to gain importance.

Of the twenty-one photographs included, only one is explicitly posed: in it, a hand holds up an empty McDonald's McCafé plastic cup so that it catches the light streaming in through a passenger seat window, an encounter that lends radiance to the disposable cup. Throughout the series, Josh's framing instills intrigue and wit into quotidian scenes: A shrink-wrapped frozen pizza on an unmade bed. Branches seen through a window onto whose dirty pane an exuberant smiley face has been traced. Both of these images feel somehow

significant whereas they originally might have just seemed gross. In other photographs, inanimate objects become human: A yellow stuffed animal stares plaintively out the rain-spattered back window of a car. A battered work glove, stuck on a wooden post, faces a row of storage lockers. On one locker, a handwritten sign reads: "unique cakes by kim." The glove's posture seems sympathetic, as if it were saying: "Yes, kim, who runs a cake store out of a storage closet, your cakes are unique."

Maybe I read into—or project onto—Josh's photographs as I do because I am so often a subject in them. The camera is always with us. He is constantly taking pictures, and the resulting stream of photographs becomes source material for all of his works. And yet, while I know the scenes are taken from our life together, they are often unrecognizable to me. They elude my recollection because the details of the larger narrative—the day, the place, the story—are always withheld. Even when my profile is presented to me, it takes me a moment to verify it as my own.

—Lauren Cornell







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