Tim Youd Heats Up With *Post Office* Parking Lot Performance

Tim Youd is a bad ass. He’s sitting in the parking lot of the downtown Los Angeles Terminal Annex Post office with a manual typewriter set up on the bed of a pick up truck. It’s 93 degrees and the sun beats down on the pages of Charles Bukowski’s autobiographical novel *Post Office*-set during the author’s fourteen year stint as a mail clerk at this very post office--that Youd has clipped in front of him. As he types away, reading almost to himself, a few people draw in closely to hear the rhythm of his voice and the typewriter keys blend together.

This is Youd’s performance and creation. When he reaches the end of his typed page, he winds it back into Underwood’s carriage and resumes his pace, tapping away, mumbling, speaking, singsonging Bukowski’s poignant, brutal, truthful words as layers of carbon build up on the page, creating abstract darkened forms. When Youd is done, the entire novel will be typed on a single page.

Taped beneath the typed page is a blank sheet. Before he began this performance, Youd and I had (fittingly) emailed about the art he was creating:

I tape two pages together and type the entire novel on the same sheet, running it through the machine over and over. When I’m done, I have the top sheet that has taken all the ink and the bottom sheet that has taken all the indentation. So there is a very formal diptych of two pages, a positive and a negative.
Charles Bukowski’s Post Office is part of an ongoing series of marathon works in Youd’s conceptual realism. In May, as part of New York’s Pulse Contemporary Art Fair and Big Sur Brooklyn Bridge, the week-long celebration of Henry Miller, Youd sat outside the Henry Miller Memorial Museum in Williamsburg, typing out Tropic of Capricorn using the brand and model of typewriter the author used.

He has other plans as well:

When I look at my list of other authors whose works I would like to treat as part of this series, I see a lot of California associations. Here are a few: Joan Didion’s Play It As It Lays and Raymond Chandler’s The Long Goodbye are both set in LA; and Thomas Pynchon’s Gravity’s Rainbow was written in a duplex in Manhattan Beach...I am hoping to type [Donald] Barthelme’s collected short stories all on one page in Houston, his home town, and I’m trying to figure out what kind if typewriter he used... In November I’ll be at Grand Central Arts in Santa Ana performing Dick’s A Scanner Darkly. Dick lived his last decade or so in Santa Ana.

But through July 26, Youd will focused on the durational work of Charles Bukowski’s Post Office, performing every day from 11am to 4pm:

I’ve scheduled 11 days, 5 hours a day. I think that should be plenty of time to get it done. In fact, I think it’s too much time. I can get through 4-5 pages an hour, and Post Office is only 196 pages. If I get too far ahead, maybe I’ll try to type it twice.

On Saturday July 27, Youd moves from the shadeless asphalt lot into Coagula Curatorial as part of Perform Chinatown, where two of Youd’s sculpted Bukowski typewriter “portraits” will be on display. To commemorate the event, Coagula Curatorial created a limited edition print of Youd’s self-portrait reading Bukowski’s Post Office. During the performances there will be two ways to acquire a limited edition print. The first is a Bukowski trivia raffle in which one can enter any day during the run of the performance, up until 8pm on the day of the concluding Perform Chinatown event. In all, 20 prints will be awarded to the patrons who have gotten the most trivia
questions correct. Or if you have a Charles Bukowski tattoo, show it to Tim, and you’ll receive a self-portrait on the spot!