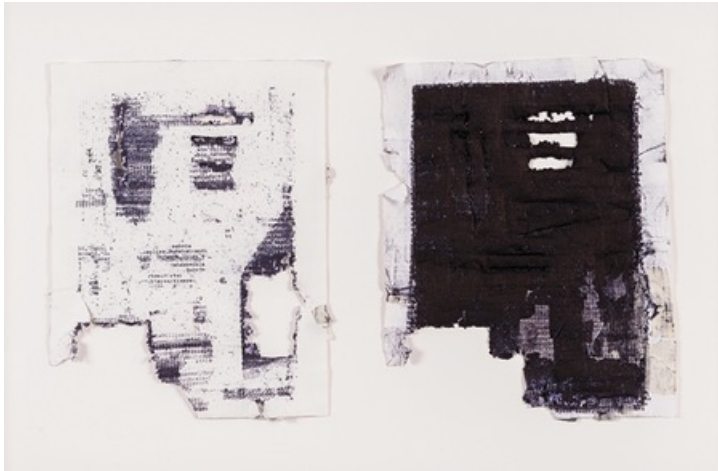


Tim Youd

CRISTIN TIERNEY



Tim Youd, *Philip K. Dick's A Scanner Darkly*, 2013, typewriter ink on paper, 17x25".

In Stanley Kubrick's much-deconstructed ur-horror film *The Shining* (1980), conclusive evidence of protagonist Jack Torrance's psychopathy appears tucked into the wayward winter caretaker's typewriter. Upon finding it, his long-suffering wife, Wendy, begins to page through a stack of similar typewritten pages nearby. To her despair, she finds the sheaf of papers previously assumed to contain Torrance's novel in progress to contain endless repetitions of the same self-mocking maxim: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." The phrase is typed in a variety of decorative configurations, as if the writer were struggling to keep himself entertained through a necessary chore, or perhaps tamp down his mania via a peculiar sort of self-flagellation or therapy. The scene is made all the creepier by its economy, a few inert bits of paper and a familiar saying signaling an irreversible disconnection from reality.

Tim Youd wields a typewriter to similarly obsessive ends. The Worcester, Massachusetts-born artist is currently in the midst of a ten-year project that involves his retyping a hundred published novels, using the same make and model of machine as each original author, and in a location pertinent to the book in question. Far from working his way through a few reams of paper each time, however, the ever-thrifty Youd makes use of just two sheets per book. Laying one atop the other, he runs the pair through the typewriter as many times as it takes to complete his protracted task, finally separating them and displaying them side by side.

For "Ecstatic Reading," his New York solo debut, Youd continued the project by retyping *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Patricia Highsmith's 1955 psychological thriller, framing the act as a performance. (He was already familiar with the author's work, having retyped her 1967 novel *Those Who Walk Away* in Venice during this year's Biennale.) The resulting work was accompanied by the framed relics of past efforts, titled for the books

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from which they were derived, including *Philip K. Dick's A Scanner Darkly*, 2013; *Jack Kerouac's Big Sur*, 2015; *Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood*, 2016; and *Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men*, 2016. During the artist's absence, his desk, chair, book, and typewriter remained for inspection, a do not touch sign emphasizing the fragile state of the last object's ragged contents.

Youd characterizes the retyping process as a devotional act requiring a meditative immersion that removes the artist from the here and now, even as he sits in front of an audience. The project aligns itself with a lineage of artists for whom the typewriter is a primary tool, though its use has in general declined as the tool itself has disappeared. More important, Youd's practice that fits neatly into Conceptual art's tradition of durational, repetitive, outwardly purposeless activity, particularly as conducted in association with verbal language: Think John Baldessari's *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, 1971, or the work of On Kawara.

The strategy has been used so much, in fact, that it has become a tool like any other, recontextualized and reemployed indefinitely. Whether this simply made "Ecstatic Reading" itself more "readable" as a set of creative acts or mitigated its eccentricity to the point of banality (and not the right kind thereof) depended largely on the viewer. Certainly the typewritten diptychs are seductive artifacts—fragments of accidental poetry emerging from their inky, pockmarked, typographic fields—and the hours poured into their creation are palpable. But what has all this work and no play done to Tim? As the Pet Shop Boys might remind us, there's a difference between being boring and being bored.

—*Michael Wilson*