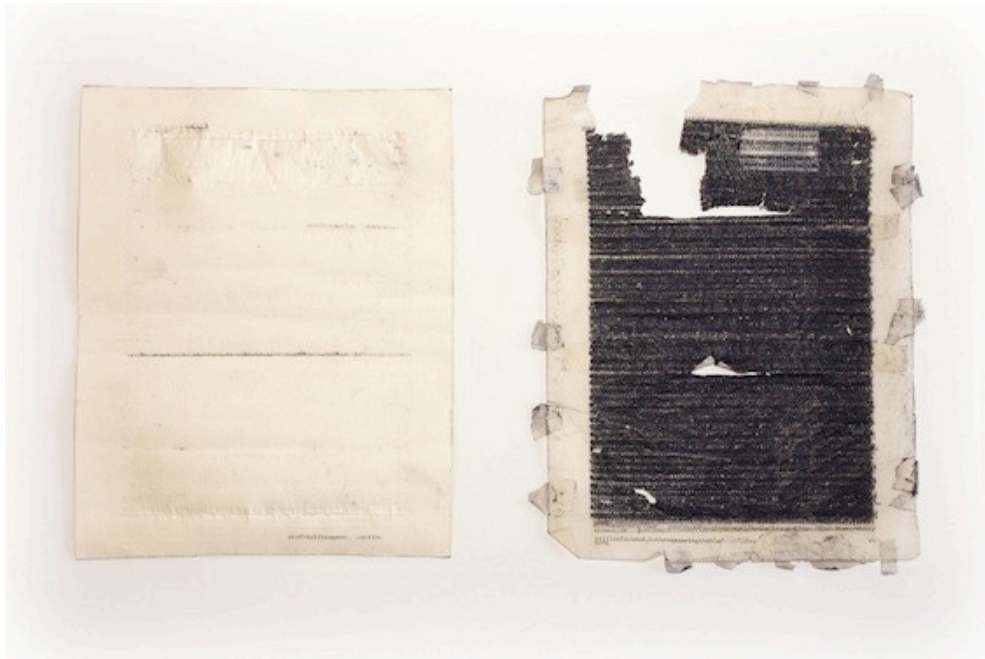


CRISTIN TIERNEY

MIAMI
New Times

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2013
BY MIAMI NEW TIMES STAFF

Elmore Leonard's South Florida Return: Artist Tim Youd to Re- Type *Get Shorty* During Art Basel



Youd's diptych of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

As Art Basel and the Miami Book Fair are poised to return, here's some news that bridges the gap between modern art and literature: In February, artist Tim Youd embarked on a five-year project in which he plans to retype 100 novels in locations related to the novel and author. From December 4 through 8 at Aqua Art Miami, Youd will be typing the crime comedy classic *Get Shorty* by the late Elmore Leonard.

The first paragraph of the novel takes place on the same Collins Avenue as the Aqua Hotel where Youd will retype the entire novel on the same make and model typewriter as Leonard used. He will type all 300 pages on two sheets of paper sandwiched together, running it over and over again. When he's done he will have a top sheet that has taken all the ink and a bottom sheet which has accumulated all the indentation of the entire novel. These two pages mount side by side in diptych form, as a relic of the performance and a representation of the book itself.

CRISTIN TIERNEY

To discuss his performance and the wit of the recently deceased Elmore Leonard, *New Times* caught up with Youd in Santa Ana, California, where he's retyping two Phillip K. Dick novels.

***New Times*: What's the most interesting interpretation you've heard for the meaning behind your performance?**

Tim Youd: I was very happy when Christopher Knight of the *LA Times* pointed out the art historical tradition of representing a book by displaying a diptych. My motivation for the diptych comes down to a formal consideration: When you open a book, you are looking at two rectangles, which are the pages; and each one of those pages contains a smaller rectangle -- the block of text. So what I wanted to do was emphasize that formal quality even further, by retyping on that page over and over again. Rectangles within rectangles. I really appreciated Knight tying my work to a long art historical tradition.

Typing a 300-page novel in five days is a grueling task. How do you prepare for it?

I think I'll really just focus on my hourly page count. I know how many hours I have at the fair, and how many pages are in the book. I just have to hit that number. Probably similar to what a marathoner does. Paces himself against the clock, knows where he is supposed to be time-wise at each mile. Plus, there will be the energy of the crowd which should help me power through.

During past performances, have people heckled you, tried to spark up a conversation, or distract you in other ways?

I can't say I've been heckled, although sometimes people will sort of laugh and ask me what the hell I'm doing. When I was on the sidewalk in Brooklyn, a few cars pulled up to ask me for directions, but I wasn't much help. As far as conversations go, I welcome those. They can slow me down, but I've found that talking to people about what I'm doing is enjoyable and worthwhile. When I started my first public performance, of Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn*, I had a little sign that said I wasn't going to talk while performing. But after a couple of hours I got rid of that, because I felt like I was missing an opportunity to engage with people. And the engagement has been a real joy for me, so I'm glad I made that choice.

CRISTIN TIERNEY



You'd's retyping of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn*.

What are some of the other novels and venues where you completed similar performances?

In May I sat on a sidewalk in Brooklyn around the corner from Henry Miller's boyhood home, and retyped his Brooklyn memoir *Tropic of Capricorn* on an Underwood Standard. I actually crashed the typewriter onto the sidewalk at the beginning of the second to last day, and so that performance ended on page 298, about 30 pages shy of the ending.

In July, I rented a pickup truck and for ten days parked in the lot of the Terminal Annex post office in downtown LA where I typed two Bukowski novels back to back, *Post Office* and *Factotum*. Bukowski sorted mail for 12 years at that very location before quitting to write *Post Office*. I used an Underwood Champion for *Post Office* and a Royal Quiet Deluxe for *Factotum*.

In August and October, I retyped Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff* at the Lancaster Museum of Art and History. Lancaster is next to Edwards Air Force base, which was the scene for the early test flights including Chuck Yeager's breaking of the sound barrier, all of which make up the early part of *The Right Stuff*. I typed on an Underwood 21, the same make and model that I understand Tom Wolfe still uses to this day.

In September I visited the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library in Indianapolis where I performed the retyping of *Breakfast of Champions* and *Slapstick* over a two week period. The Library is a great repository for Vonnegut artifacts, including the original Smith-Corona Coronamatic 2200 that he used during the 1970s. That's in a glass case, so I didn't use that, but I brought with me one just like it. In fact I brought two, because electric typewriters can be finicky -- and sure enough I needed to go to the backup after the first one jammed at about the halfway point.

CRISTIN TIERNEY

Because the IBM Wheelwriter I'll be using in Miami for *Get Shorty* is electric, I'll be bringing two there as well, just in case.

Right now, In November I am at the Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana, California, where I am retyping two Philip K. Dick novels -- *A Scanner Darkly* and *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said*. It's something of a little known fact that PKD lived the last decade of his life in virtual anonymity in Santa Ana. The Grand Central Art Center is about five blocks away from the condo where Dick spent most of these years. I'm using a 1970s model of the Olympia SG-1, which is a beast of a machine. As of this writing I'm 100 pages into *A Scanner Darkly*, and it's already torn large holes in the top sheet.

You have previously typed two other Elmore Leonard novels. What attracts you to Elmore Leonard?

I'd say my attraction to Elmore Leonard had really been through the movies based on his novels. So this project gave me a chance to read a few of the books. And I haven't been disappointed. That's a great thing about this 100 novels project. I'm getting to read deeply into areas that I've overlooked, or haven't known about.

Do you find yourself getting in the mind of the writer as you type their works? If so what can you tell us about the mind of the recently departed Leonard?

I wouldn't say that I am channeling the author or anything like that. I think my undertaking is more devotional than anything else. But I certainly am highly engaged in the text as I am retyping. Most of the time I mumble the words out loud, which helps me keep my place as I hunt and peck for the right keys. And so I was pretty deeply immersed in Elmore Leonard as I retyped *Maximum Bob* and *Rum Punch*. What I can say about him is that he liked a snappy line of dialogue, and loved a pretty girl in a short skirt, especially if she was pointing a gun at someone.