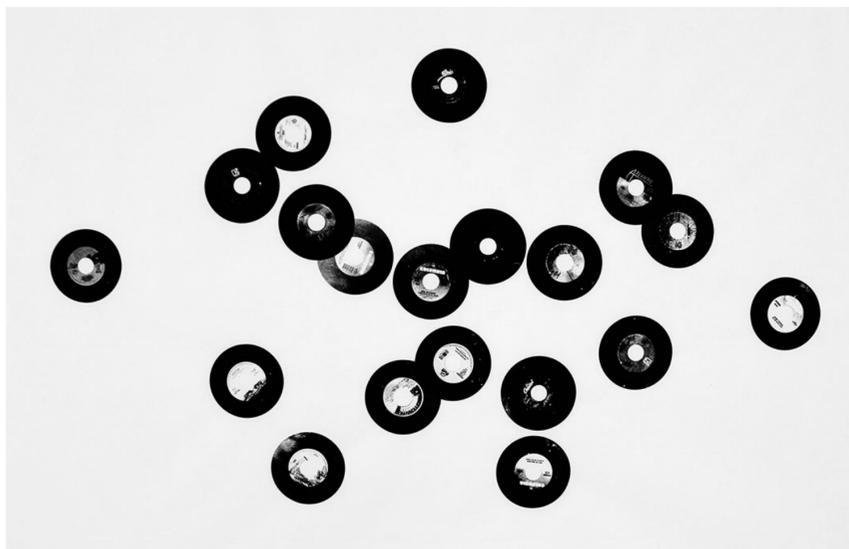


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TR Ericsson, *45's*, 2018, graphite, resin, and funerary ash on muslin, 59 × 82 5/8".

TR Ericsson

HARLAN LEVEY PROJECTS 1050

TR Ericsson's "Industrial Poems—*Poèmes Industriels*" was a very private yet despairing portrait of the relationship between a mother and son. The artist captures this relationship in two phases: the period during which he had to deal with his mother's mental instability; and his life after her suicide.

Ericsson's art reflects his experiences with a great deal of intimacy, and at first this felt uncomfortable, as if one were intruding on personal affairs. Yet its resonance was more than just personal; rather, it was an eerie reminder of the socioeconomic wasteland of the postindustrial American Midwest, where the artist grew up and where his mother, Susan, died. All the works evoked the ongoing effects of domestic violence, alcoholism, unemployment, and relentless apathy.

Before entering the space, one saw a freestanding wall bearing an enlarged image of detailed phone charges, plainly titled *Phone Bill*, 2018. It shows a huge number of calls to the same Brooklyn number: the artist's. His mother had sent the bill to him, and at the top of the page in her handwriting is the message awful! interfering "m"! The print is made of graphite, resin, and funerary ash on muslin.

As it turned out, most of the printed works in the show were made with Susan's ashes. Her physical yet invisible presence in the gallery represented her profound and abiding presence in her son's life. Another print, *45's*, 2018, depicted her collection of seven-inch records, showing the vinyl discs spread out as if on the floor. Looking more closely, the viewer realized that the songs named in the records' center labels were those one could hear being played in the gallery. Not all were hits, but all were loaded with implications. Titles such as "Forever in Blue Jeans" or "Angel of the Morning" took on a different meaning within the context of this show. Across the space on the back wall hung *Browning 1957*, 2017, the largest of the ash prints, showing an old class photo of Susan's. It didn't matter which of the little children's faces was hers. Seen in this setting all of them seemed like ghosts.

On the largest wall in the gallery was *Can you hear her blacks crackle and drag?*, 2018, a collection of twenty-nine black polystyrene squares that Ericsson, à la Marcel Broodthaers, had vacuum-formed into shallow reliefs. He molded each from one of a number of personal effects—credit cards, shot glasses, perfume bottles, ashtrays—collected from his mother's home after her death. The single square hanging separate and forlorn was a relief of her push-button telephone, exempted by its significance as an instrument of her calls for comfort and his willingness to answer.

Susan Robinson, 2018, a full-size pool table whose gray cloth surface has been printed with the artist's mother's wedding portrait—again, in graphite, resin, and ashes—stood in the middle of the space. On the wall next to it hung a rack with two cue sticks and sixteen balls, each bearing a passage from Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (1843), also the title of the 2018 work. On August 14, 2003, just two months after his mother's suicide, a blackout left the greater part of the American Midwest and Northeast in darkness. Ericsson found himself playing pool in a pool hall in Manhattan by the light of the sun coming through the front window. When it got too dark, and with all transportation stalled, he walked home to Brooklyn. It was then that he fell back on Kierkegaard's writings, which he's now transferred onto hard, round, unblemished surfaces. Trying to come to terms with this personal trauma, he decided simply to be, and live, and do. And choose. He knew that the memory of his mother would only debilitate him if he did not act on it—if he did not set these balls in motion, crashing into each other. This uncanny decision has resulted in an interesting paradox; in order to preserve himself, Ericsson has preserved the literal embodiment of his mother by using her ashes as material. He has eternalized her possessions in a vacuum. He has had to return to their time together, in order to live without her.

—*Huib Haye van der Werf*

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