

PRESS RELEASE

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OBJECT LESSONS – VIDEO WORKS BY JOHN SMITH

1 FEBRUARY – 9 MARCH, 2013

PREVIEW THURSDAY 31 JANUARY 6 – 9pm

DAD'S STICK (2012) 5 MIN

UNUSUAL RED CARDIGAN (2011) 13 MIN

HOME SUITE (1993-4) 96 MIN

Tanya Leighton is very pleased to present 'Object Lessons' by East London artist-filmmaker John Smith. This is Smith's third solo show at the gallery. His work can also be seen at transmediale 2013 – the Berlin-based art, culture and technology festival - with screenings on 30 January and 2 February. (<http://www.transmediale.de/bwpwap>)

For 'Object Lessons' at Tanya Leighton, Smith will present three video works: Dad's Stick, 2012 (a recent commission by Frieze Film London), unusual Red cardigan, 2011, and Home Suite, 1993-4, all of which closely scrutinize inanimate objects and their real or imagined histories. These objects are brought to life by spoken words and captions in the form of descriptions, memories and speculations, reminding us of their unique past lives in the hands of numerous unseen protagonists.

Dad's Stick focuses upon three well-used objects that were shown to the artist by his father shortly before he died. Two of these were so steeped in history that their original forms and functions were almost completely obscured. A third object seemed to be instantly recognisable, but turned out to be something else entirely. Taking these enigmatic artefacts as its starting point, Dad's Stick creates a dialogue between visual abstraction and literal meaning, exploring the contradictions of memory and history to hint at the character of a dead father and his relationship with his son.

In unusual Red cardigan Smith's discovery of an overpriced VHS tape of his films on eBay triggers obsessive speculation about the seller's identity, based upon the revelation that the seller has put a diverse collection of other things up for sale. The three chapters of Home Suite (showing in this exhibition on three separate monitors) take us on an extended close-up journey through a decaying domestic landscape. Playing upon ambiguity and the unseen, Home Suite uses physical details of the artist's house and its contents to trigger fragmented verbal descriptions of associated memories. "The space gradually fills with its history: complex, eccentric, funny - until it has become a kind of monumental environment, about which epic stories could be told for ever more. The work serves to remind us about the complexities of the history of even simple spaces and objects, a complexity to which most films do not even begin to do justice." Nicky Hamlyn, *Film Art Phenomena*

TANYA LEIGHTON

John Smith's work has been widely shown internationally for more than three decades. It is regarded for its formal ingenuity and its ability to combine compelling narrative with an acute observation of the everyday, often subverting the boundaries between documentary and fiction. As Smith puts it, '...if you look hard enough all meanings can be found or produced close to home.'

Smith's recent solo exhibitions include: 'Horizon', Turner Contemporary, Margate (2012); 'Bildstörung', Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover (2012); 'Worst Case Scenario', Weserburg Museum of Modern Art, Bremen (2012) and 'unusual Red cardigan', PEER, London (2011). Group shows include: 'Image Counter Image', Haus der Kunst, Munich (2012); 'Locus Solus: Impressions of Raymond Roussel', Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid (2011) and Serralves Museum, Porto (2012); 'Descriptive Acts', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2012); 'Has the Film Already Started', Tate Britain, London (2011) and 'The Talent Show', Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and MoMA PS1, New York (2010). John Smith received a Paul Hamlyn Award for Artists in 2011. His work is included in a number of collections including the Arts Council, London; Tate Gallery, London; Ferens Art Gallery, Hull and Cisneros Foundation, Miami. A forthcoming artist's monograph will shortly be available at the gallery, published by Mousse and Sternberg Press.

For further details contact [info@tanyaleighton.com](mailto:info@tanyaleighton.com) or tel +49 (0)30221607770. Gallery open Tuesday - Saturday 11-6pm and by appointment.