

ANDREW RAFACZ

835 W Washington
Chicago, IL 60607

info@andrewrafacz.com
+ 312 404 9188

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:

Andrew Rafacz
+ 312 404 9188
info@andrewrafacz.com
www.andrewrafacz.com

ANDREW RAFACZ is pleased to announce *The Rickshaw*, a solo exhibition by Jason Lazarus in Gallery One.

Chicago, IL, April 16, 2016– ANDREW RAFACZ presents *The Rickshaw*, a solo exhibition of two installations and a photograph by Jason Lazarus. The exhibition continues through Saturday, May 21, 2016.

Jason Lazarus has long been interested in the conceptual possibilities of vernacular photography. He has, over the better part of the last decade, collected found images and their accompanying texts, an activity at the core of his larger practice. For the artist, this strategy engages in the acts of framing and unfolding, building a larger connected discourse through the collection and manifestation of the personal, sovereign image and its descriptor.

Extending this strategy, Lazarus debuts a series of new gestures that are connected by their conceptual potential to both frame and unmask larger ideas. Beginning from the notion of the storefront as a charged location, the artist's first gesture—and the anchor work in the exhibition—is an LED light installation on the west wall of the gallery. Lazarus reproduces the LED lights framing an independent storefront in his current hometown of Tampa, FL. Transferring the pattern and scale of the existing storefront of a recently failed business to the gallery's wall, he presents only the contour of lights tracing the periphery of its façade. These bright white, static LED lights are ubiquitous in Florida and are used to present and promote independent businesses, primarily in shopping plazas set back from the street. They remain lit incessantly and at this rate, they last roughly 3.5 years, often longer than the businesses they illuminate. During the day they appear hyper-real, mimicking a Photoshop effect—they are significantly brighter than daylight, yet they don't illuminate anything. They point toward their audience only as they ring around images, making the image itself into a drop shadow. At night they are geometric voids, reducing the idiosyncratic architecture into wireframes. For the artist, these indexical storefront reconfigurations are indebted to and continue the tradition of Walker Evans' storefront photographs. The vernacular tradition lingers in these LED wireframes; they become a contemporary iteration of the hand-painted sign. In the artist's view, when mounted in the gallery space, they embody a post-photographic strategy.

The artist's second gesture, occupying the majority of the wall facing his light installation, is a continuation of his series of *ink pours*. Begun in 2014, Lazarus deconstructs the digital files of existing photographs into their constituent colors and amounts of ink needed for their hypothetical production. He performs these photographs by pouring the necessary volume of each pigment down a chosen wall. The result is a graphic surrogate of the original image. With this exhibition, the artist has chosen for the first time to deconstruct multiple source photographs of storefronts. They will be presented as one, longer RGB color space of varying lengths, obliquely manifesting a range of images that reference the storefront as a structure, a political space, a conceptual idea, and a field of multiple signs.

As the third gesture in his gallery exhibition, Lazarus will present one new contained photograph, from his series of *afterimages*. Since 2014, the artist has been printing reversed tone photographs that feature a small magenta-colored focusing dot. The viewer is encouraged to stare at the dot for a period of time, close their eyes, and engage a new version of the original image. The original image is typically one that is already charged with social and political content, and for this exhibition, Lazarus has chosen a reportage image captured in front of the Niketown store on Michigan Avenue during the protest over the fatal police shooting of Laquan McDonald on Black Friday, 2015. Taking over the Magnificent Mile in downtown Chicago during the busiest shopping day of the year, the protesters used the storefront as a political pressure point, disrupting the easy flow of capitalism.

The artist's fourth gesture will occur offsite and continue through the run of his gallery exhibition. Two months before leaving Chicago for the University of South Florida, Tampa, Lazarus arranged an open call for a group portrait open to anyone identifying as a Chicago artist. On June 20th, 2015 approximately 600 artists arrived to the front plaza of the

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and the resultant photograph, while also available freely online, will be published as a physical takeaway and available free to the public at The Chicago Cultural Center.

The artist has experienced another phenomenon in his new home of Tampa with the regular presence of *image busking* from sign handlers along the city's roads. Workers are hired to hold signs just off the busy action of the road (many of the businesses are 30-50 yards off the road and need to attract visitors). In practice, holding signs becomes the most basic form of a hierarchy that includes costumes, jiggling, air pumping, dancing, or practiced spinning and flipping of wind-friendly image-graphics. In one case, a man on Lazarus' daily commute works a high-traffic intersection adorned with a wearable sandwich board for a local law firm. He gets paid \$9 per hour to walk around a single intersection. The sandwich board is simply too big for him to dance with or even effectively jiggle. From neck to ankles this man is a near optical illusion, a figure that is swallowed up by his work. The two signs are joined on top by chains that are then jerry-rigged with backpack straps. For the artist, he is a rickshaw for the late-capitalism sign-image.

JASON LAZARUS (American, b. 1975) lives and works in Chicago. He received his M.F.A. in photography from Columbia College in 2003. Recent solo exhibitions include the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS (2014); Luminary Center for the Arts, St. Louis, MO (2014); Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA (2013); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (2013); Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA (2011); Illinois State University Museum, Normal, IL (2011); and the Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA (2010). Notable group exhibitions include *Love to Love You*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2013); *Histories/Photographies* at the DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, IL (2013); *On the Scene: Jason Lazarus, Wolfgang Ploger, Zoe Strauss*, at the Art Institute of Chicago (2009); and *Black Is, Black Ain't*, Renaissance Society, Chicago (2008). His film *twohundredfiftysixcolors* (with Eric Fleischauer and Theodore Darst) has been screened internationally. A newly commissioned work, *Recordings #3 (At Sea)*, will be included in *About Time: Photographs from the Collection*, opening as part of the new SFMOMA in May. His work is included in numerous public and private collections. This is the artist's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery.