

# THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

Artists Joel Ross and Jason Creps craft sardonic messages that may push viewers out of their comfort zones

Reviewed by Caitlin Greenwood, Fri., May 31, 2013



In "Not How It Happened," artists Joel Ross and Jason Creps play with language to compose quick, sardonic statements and imprint these messages on signs. The signs are then installed on either public or private property, photographed, and then abandoned. The exhibition is composed of these messages sketched out on paper, sculptural signs, and photographs of the signs in their installed space.

When asked about tracking the lifespan of a piece, Ross and Creps laughed, both chiming in to say that if they stumbled upon a piece later and it was on fire, they'd happily take a picture and let it burn. They've watched pieces get picked up,

kicked around, and end up blocks away from their original installation site. Both artists were elated to find their work trashed. It's not solely the renegade attitude of the exhibition that's appealing, though it's exciting to see installation artists invested in the larger impact of their work instead of confining their collection to a gallery.

Ross and Creps took a very accessible approach with their work, making the photographs captivating as stand-alone images. In contrast to the immediate impact of their messages, Ross and Creps' photographs are quiet, subtle, suburban scenes. The large-scale photographs help identify physical space as either a frame for the text or a backdrop to the artists' punch line that is made all the funnier by its surroundings. It helps contextualize the whole process of Ross and Creps' work, from the brainstorming about messages to the scouting for installation locations. Everything is meticulous – nothing is happenstance.

In one of the images, titled "*IN THE FUTURE*," a faint "Famous" is painted onto a concrete wall in a drainage ditch while bright white signs in the foreground state "In The Future." It's an optimistic statement embedded in a truly unfortunate landscape. It's this humorous dichotomy of expectation and reality, a spectrum in which Ross and Creps excel. Ross' piece "#UC!\*&+% " sits in the middle of the gallery. Seven blocks with individual letters are haphazardly stacked on top and against one another. The nod to building blocks takes on a darker tone when you realize the jumbled piece spells out "Fuckable." It's so profane, in such a pristine presentation, that it's hard not to laugh.

"Not How It Happened" forces its audience to embrace the tone of the exhibition or risk a comfort zone being breached. It's an exhibition worth spending time with, and audiences should visit the artists' off-site installation in the front window of Okay Mountain on Cesar Chavez.