

Can Yerebakan, Osman. "Exhibition Reviews: A Pound of Pictures." *Aesthetica*, February 2021.

# Aesthetica

## Exhibition Reviews

### 1 A Pound of Pictures

ALEC SOTH

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, physicist Duncan MacDougall tried to prove that the human soul weighed 21 grams. Whilst gloriously flawed, the premise still echoes with poetic enigma. Alec Soth's new exhibition, *A Pound of Pictures*, at Sean Kelly, New York, asks how much the soul of pictures might weigh.

The show's title refers to Soth's encounter with a saleswoman on a trip to Los Angeles. Intrigued by a "photography by the pound" business, the artist bought 60 pounds (lb) of pictures on a \$2 per-pound-deal. Soth later sorted out the mountainous pile of mementos – strangers, places and objects – with his daughter. The process followed him throughout the rest of the cross-country journey. The resulting show, offering 23 works, depicts different corners of the American landscape, each with a reference to the purchased images.

"The real weight is psychological, not physical," Soth notes.

He had formerly collected pictures of "various types of the vernacular," such as seesaws or Ping-Pong games.

In *Tim and Vanessa's Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania* (2019), an ample spread of photography over a table offers a snippet from the titular couple's 500,000-picture collection. *Abandoned House, Coahoma Mississippi* (2021) shows another heap of pictures blended with flowers and video tapes over a red shroud. The images are survivors of a deserted house in which humanity has vanished in flesh but remained in stills.

These are images of a quest: of disillusionment, mundanity, but also, potential. The key for Soth's perfectly crafted distance is, perhaps, his choice of company. "Throughout the 10 or so trips I took for the project, I was always accompanied by young people. It's exciting to experience the world with someone processing surroundings with fresh curiosity."

Words  
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Sean Kelly, New York  
14 January - 26 February

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