

Colby Chamberlain, "Frank Heath," *Artforum.com*, posted on April 11, 2012.

## ARTFORUM

### Frank Heath

SIMONE SUBAL

131 Bowery, 2nd floor

March 30–April 26

At the core of Derrida's *The Post Card* (1980) is this key insight: Contrary to Lacan's famous claim, a letter can always not arrive at its destination, and it's this chance for drift that allows change—history itself—to occur. Frank Heath's solo exhibition is a series of posts without return. First, *Reruns* (all works 2012), five diptychs that juxtapose clippings from the same newspaper published on the same date, only decades apart; in each pair, the precise wording of one classified appears twice, the result of Heath's placing the advertisements anew this past February and March. Lost bags, missed connections, calls for railway mail clerks: These

announcements appear doubled in old and new clippings, open inquiries untethered from time. Second, three sculptures, titled *Former Structures*, each bearing evidence of a sharp straight cut—the sort of rough edge that, in the work of Gordon Matta-Clark, hinted at an object's extraction from an architectural site. In this case, each structure was sliced in two, with its missing half sent in the mail to the defunct address of a vanished institution: the *New York World*, the Capitol Theatre, the City Hall Post Office. With the gallery listed as their return address, the pieces are in transit, suspended between the exhibition and an anachronism, whereabouts unknown. Third, the fifty-one-minute *Graffiti Report Form*, which takes its cue from a line in the NYC Parks and Recreation Department's official paperwork welcoming citizens to upload or mail in video or photography of found vandalism. The video starts plausibly enough, with Heath speaking over his POV camerawork at the entrance of Morningside Park, promising to lead his civil-servant audience to the site of fresh graffiti. Quickly, though, it strays, diverted by the park's numerous indications of neglect; threads of amateur anthropology, historical investigation, and literary allusion intertwine. The video was submitted to the Parks Department this past January, and it's hard to imagine how the city might process a document of such poetic excess.

*Graffiti Report Form* ends with a passage from *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), and Samuel Beckett's mood of mute desolation seems fitting. There's something unbearably lonely about these works. They call out for response but comport themselves as dead letters. Yet in their despondency, there's drift; in normally closed systems of circulation and officialdom, spaces of possibility push open.



Frank Heath, *Former Structure / Distribution Case* (City Hall Post Office, Broadway and Park Row, New York, NY 10038), 2012, wood, paint, postage, 39 x 39 x 10".

— Colby Chamberlain