



Tom Friedman (Contemporary Artists (Phaidon))

Bruce Hainley, Dennis Cooper, Adrian Searle

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The work of Tom Friedman (b.1965) captures for many the essence of art at the beginning of a new century. It is modest in scale, imaginative and ecological, painstakingly crafted and 'unheroic'. Friedman suggests a new direction in art: post video, post political/identity issues, post digital media, post ready-mades. Friedman works in a windowless studio (more like a playground-kitchen-laboratory) in rural Massachusetts, relentlessly inventing these startling ephemeral objects 'out of the stuff in my house': bits of Styrofoam, packing material, bottle tops, pencil shavings, plastic straws, dental floss, spaghetti, toothpicks, bubble gum. Some of his works are too delicate to move, existing solely in photographs and, above all, in the imagination. This is art that, to quote New York Times critic Roberta Smith, 'raises wonderful questions about the making and seeing of art': about paying attention, about how we spend our time, and about the pleasures of small transformations producing sudden beauty. Solo exhibitions of Friedman's works have been held at The Museum of Modern Art in New York and at The Art Institute of Chicago. A major exhibition of his work, 'Tom Friedman: The Epic in the Everyday' toured in 2000-2 to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York and the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. American art critic Bruce Hainley examines the artist's work as a kind of giant self-portrait. Poet and novelist Dennis Cooper discusses with the artist such unexpected influences as contemporary electronic music. Guardian art critic Adrian Searle looks at the artist's work *Untitled*, 1993: a ring of plastic cups in a home-made Minimalist tradition. The Artist's Choices are *The Dinner Party* (1919) by Swiss writer Robert Walser, and the glossary to *Info-Psychology* (1975-6) by Timothy Leary, the cult psychologist who advocated the use of psychedelic drugs. Facsimiles of the artist's notebooks and text works are published alongside an important interview by renowned curator Robert Storr.

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