# <u>Educator Notes</u>

# Jack Pierson: 5 Shows from the '90s

## February 10–May 28, 2017



Installation view: Jack Pierson, *5 Shows from the '90s*, 2017. Photo: Tony Prikryl

## About the artist

Jack Pierson was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1960, and lives and works in New York. In 1984, he received his BFA from Massachusetts College of Art, Boston. Recent group exhibitions have taken place at: the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Tacoma Art Museum, Nasher Museum of Art, Children's Museum of Art, New York, and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

## About the exhibition

For more than two decades, New York–based artist Jack Pierson has been using the visual languages of photography, painting, sculpture, and drawing to examine intimate and emotional aspects of everyday life. Gaining recognition alongside a group of photographers known as the Boston School—including David Armstrong, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Nan Goldin, and Mark Morrisroe, among others—Pierson explores the cultural construction of identity, including how we see and, ultimately, how others see us.

The artist's Aspen Art Museum show is a tightly curated survey that re-presents a series of pivotal exhibitions from the nineties. Just as the exhibition looks back to this moment, notice how many of the works convey a passage of time: photographs capture bygone times, text works use found letters that have been recycled into a new purpose, and abstract blue paintings have titles that suggest fleeting moments such as *Every Hour* or *Harlem Nocturne*. Pierson's choice of words, portrait subjects, and environments are perhaps autobiographical and reveal an intimate side of the artist's life, and also are open enough to allow us to interpret narratives and create stories of our own.

## Questions for discussion

ı In one of the reviews of Pierson's exhibitions from the nineties, art critic Jerry Saltz said the artist "celebrates and records the uneventful, unimportant details of life, which in the end, sometimes turn out to be the most significant of all." What are small moments in your life that are important memories?

ı Who do you think that the subjects of these portraits are?

ı What words or images do you choose to surround yourself with? What does this reflect about your dreams and aspirations?

## Suggested activities

### Found memories

Gather drawing paper, graphite pencils, colored pencils, oil pastels, a camera, and a collection of small, discarded objects that will easily fit on a desk.

Ask your students to find something in or around their school or home that has been discarded, paying close attention to objects that could be deemed unimportant or overlooked. Have students work in pairs to create a mini installation or arrangement on a desk with a selection of the found items.

Invite students to record their arrangement, first with a camera and then by sketching with graphite or colored pencils on paper. Once finished, have students arrange the drawings and digital images on a wall, and have a discussion about the stories that might emerge from these new arrangements. To further the activity, students could write a short story and use their drawings or images to illustrate it.

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email education@aspenartmuseum.org

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