



**External  
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## ***Run***

Faraz Anoushehpour

February 17<sup>th</sup> – March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Notions of distance and duration permeate Faraz Anoushehpour's video, *Run*. Shot in a single black and white take, the protagonist runs through a desolate suburb on a winter's day.

The viewer is unaware of the performer's motivations as the camera records from the back of a car. Anoushehpour runs through a mostly empty neighbourhood, turning on the street corners. It is cold outside and Anoushehpour wears a toque, slacks, sweater and flat shoes, but no coat. After four minutes of sprinting through the residential area, the performer stops to catch his breath, while the camera continues on. Anoushehpour shrinks in size.

*Run* was filmed with a handycam in a single take. The single shot, with its distinctly linear temporality, emphasizes Anoushehpour's physicality. The ambient sound is overshadowed by the sound of the artist's force. While the runner's intentions remain unknown, his movements are filled with dramatic suspense that is underscored by his speed and endurance. Despite the piece's success at building a sense of anticipation, there is ultimately no tangible explanation for the performer's motives.

Influenced by the stark black and white photography of John Divola's 1996 series, *As Far as I Could Get*, the footage of *Run* is both rich and stark; its neutrality and direct focus is beautiful. *Run* occupies a somewhat voyeuristic space; the camera merely observes and does not interject in the subject's plight. Inspired by the long takes and durational performances of films such as Alan Clarke's 1989 film *Elephant*, the video contains no dialogue. The plot and narrative are minimal, mostly left to the viewer's imagination. What results is a raw, voyeuristic feeling.

The title for Clarke's film, *Elephant* alludes to the common saying, "an elephant in the room". This expression refers to the refusal to acknowledge something of extreme importance. Similarly, *Run* maintains its elephant in the room; the viewer does not learn why they are watching this scene. Did the subject leave somewhere in haste? Perhaps his home, or another's? Anoushehpour explains his intention: "By altering familiar elements, I create something extrinsic: the video is set in the suburbs, the action is jogging and the cinematic trope is a monochromatic single take. The video almost ends where I start running, creating a physical loop. I pose questions without leaving clear answers or conclusions."

*Run* possesses a seemingly outsider quality to it. The subject, Anoushehpour, who immigrated to Canada, travels on his own. Anoushehpour reveals:

*Run* is part of a series of performative videos carried out in the neighborhood where my mother resides. The suburbia and lack of identity/character that is often associated with these suburban landscapes is what I am addressing through these projects. In a way you could read them as portraits that are of the artists and the locations/actions that they are set in.

By placing the themes of change, temporality and individuality within a new lexicon, Anoushehpour's *Run* unsettles the viewer, communicating that sometimes portraits are messy and abstract, with no beginning, middle or end. Running through suburbia, while seemingly mundane, can in fact be an exercise in questions around productivity and existentialism.

-Katie Kotler