

# SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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**CHICAGO**  
**Tony Lewis: "Pall"**  
**at Shane Campbell Gallery**

Someday a graduate student is going to write a thesis on the influence the comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes* (syndicated, 1985-95) had on contemporary art in Chicago. This is the second exhibition I've written about that draws on that comic (the first being Ben Stone at Western Exhibitions in 2007). The attraction is probably rooted in the Chicago tradition of delight in vernacular culture, of mining what seems unlikely and overlooked territory for cultural or personal revelation. For Tony Lewis—a participant in the 2014 Whitney Biennial—a *Calvin and Hobbes* strip invites a form of existential poetic intervention, with just that dollop of the idiosyncratically goofy that makes it intriguing. Taking individual cells from different strips, Lewis blackens out the entire rectangle except for the speech balloon, and uses correction fluid (commonly known as white-out) to obscure every word in that balloon except for those that become part of his 'poem'. Here, for example, is how *The Planet*, (2015), reads: *Hope / Don't come n boxes. / Dangerous / And / Stupid / Hypothetically, let's say hypothetically. / Hypothetically, / Man lasts forever! / I'll / Sit still so the bleeding can stop*. This plays out over nine cells, culled from separate *Calvin and Hobbes* strips, here presented as if all in one, in a process suggesting some Surrealist game. Part of the allure of this series (nine were shown here) resides in the thought of Lewis hunkered down over sheets of old comics, finding a word he covets or another that triggers a new possibility, composing (in his strangely dark, John Cage-inspired sort of way) out of a restricted pool of material to reinvent it as a form of altered found object.

These pieces line the walls, but the floor gets mega-attention too. Lewis covered the entire 44-by-66 foot gallery floor space with charcoal black paper, graphite powder, blackish paint, and dark tape, in *Untitled (Wabash)*, (2015) (the gallery is located on Wabash Ave). Seemingly strewn atop the floor are two crumpled piles of battered dark paper that seem to have seen better days. These are what are left from the floor coverings of two of his previous exhibitions, less archival remnants than trace memories, both of his projects and the inevitable alterations the hundreds or thousands of feet made upon them. Everything is always in a state of transition, and this is always on its way to becoming that.

—JAMES YOOD

"THE PLANET," 2015, Tony Lewis  
PENCIL, GRAPHITE POWDER, AND CORRECTION FLUID ON PAPER  
AND TRANSPARENCY, 11" x 8½"  
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