

EIGHT DAYS What a colossal glorious waste of time I call it freedom Chicago to Los Angeles the Great Diagonal Way the Mother Road Main Street of America – Route 66 – for decades the highway that seemed only to go in one direction proud and emblematic of America on the move striding boldly to the future now fading remnants a metaphor for a moment of crisis if ever there was one **riding around with my brother who is like a brother he builds submarines and being out on our bikes tracking down route 66 was one of the greatest things I've ever experienced I've always wanted to do this but in our teens we had no money and in our forties we had no time** now abandoned and in parts derelict and forgotten no longer given even the dignity of being recorded on printed maps too damn slow and meandering the script rewritten by infrastructure of greater efficiency that bypassed and in many cases doomed the hard scrabble two bit towns along the historical way – Route 66 – officially erased from the United States Highway System in 1985 still lives in the cultural imagination **you know parts of it have been abandoned you're just riding along and it ends in a farmers field we just went with it we had a map printed on paper we didn't fucking twitter and we didn't GPS bitch what we did have is a lot of cowboy steaks and beer thats what we ate and coffee coffee is a vegetable it's bean juice** James Lahey and his brother Patrick set off down this still potent byway of restless youth searching for meaning a painter and a submarine builder driving into the archeology of American signs following the path of freedom the trail of radical independence of movement and thought along the way tasting the sticky residue of speed and power hearing distant echoes of beat poets and sixties radicals in search of a new spirit finding decay abandonment dead ends and faint traces where nature and commerce are taking back the trail we left off James inspired by the persistence and stubborn resolve that keep people still clinging to this heroic pathway finally realizing that the profound beauty of the way to the beauty is by far the most beautiful beauty of all **all I have ever wanted to do was make pictures whatever it takes as long as I could I make pictures for a living not some fucking rusty trombone art world plywood box installation with some screaming stonethrower sitting inside don't get me wrong I got nothing against the stone-throwers I just want to make pictures** searching and never finding

EIGHT DAYS is a project that weaves complex strands of American culture Canadian art and the struggles of an artist with his life and work evidence here of a cri de coeur – a strike for freedom – still with a deep connection and respect for his elders unconsciously linking to the tradition of Group of Seven backpackers as they headed north in this case south to find the majesty they saw in the land **it's a good thing that very few so called important things happen to me because that kind of shit drives me nuts if I have a meeting on a Friday it will ruin my entire week remind me never to do public work** now we hear the distant voice of Ed Ruscha in the embrace of the banal utilitarian signs left by the side of the road the flotsam of Andy Warhol and jetsam of Robert Rauschenberg in the complex image layering and detritus of the roadside garbage culture of the vast American middle connected to the Canadian classic “Going Down the Road” and the road movie tradition EIGHT DAYS in search of the American imaginary **Dad used to call that kind of guy ten pounds of horse shit in a five pound bag back then they didn't say shit they said horseshit I'm afraid of what I've said** EIGHT DAYS connects the diverse practices and passions of James Lahey's decades of practice in photography in full flowing dialogue with his unique mastery of painting for the first time we are privileged to see the work expressed in both picture and painting now combined with his abiding love of speed on two wheels **there is nothing – nothing – like the experience of the road on my motorcycle –** the central visual motif of the work not surprising since the life and work of James Lahey has been a road trip of the imagination keep moving not knowing and here connecting the dots beyond these beauties and bounty the hauntingly evocative postcards of poet Lynn Crosbie **her work is so goddamn beautiful so sorrowful intense a blessing if you go only with what the market wants you get OK and down the road you don't want to be looking at OK we went into a bar in Texas and this guy says hey you're from Canada didn't your Prime Minister strangle that guy that's the whole fucking point Jack wasting time having fucking time of your own to waste** he often travels alone James is an artist.

— BRUCE MAU Chicago 2011