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"Ed Templeton Scenes from Passing Cars"  
Christopher Knight  
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Society was transformed when President Eisenhower championed the construction of an interstate highway system in 1956, with its profound alteration of personal and commercial transportation and the elevation of auto manufacturing into a top-tier enterprise. With considerable justification, it has even been said that asphalt built the American middle class.

"The Seconds Pass," Ed Templeton's melancholic, even troubling photographs at Roberts & Tilton look at a late stage of that transformation, and society seems to teeter at the brink of ruin and collapse. The pictures, made during the last 15 years in nine different countries but mostly the United States (and especially L.A.), were all shot from a moving car. Lined up around the gallery in 38 sets of framed sequences, each with between three and six individual images joined edge-to-edge, they encourage a visitor to read them from left to right, like a book.

Jack Kerouac's novel "On the Road" and Edward Ruscha's artist's books "Every Building on the Sunset Strip" and "Royal Road Test" are evoked. So is John Baldessari's work, where mundane, unrelated photographs are juxtaposed to create implied if unsuspecting pictorial narratives.

Templeton – a pro skateboarder whose vocation splits the difference between life on the sidewalk and being on wheels – displays a marvelous sense of proportion in these mostly black-and-white works. He focuses on pedestrians, who wait at bus stops, cross the street, gather at food stands and move past shops both tony and shabby.



Once in a while you find yourself stranded in a parking lot, or looking over at Jay Leno in a souped-up roadster at a gas pump, or puzzling over a transient incongruously walking along a freeway shoulder. Perhaps it's the distance between the moving, auto-bound photographer and his mostly slower subjects relegated to foot, but most everyone in the pictures seems somehow bereft.

Suddenly, when a man with a camera (the artist?) turns up in a picture that includes a side-view mirror, you realize that you too are here relegated to pedestrian status in the mobile society – however down on its heels – that's chronicled in these pictures. But life moves on, and that picture is quickly forgotten as it's replaced by the mysterious conundrum of a man with a surfboard waiting patiently at a crosswalk for the light to change.