

Chelsea Spengemann, 'New York Critics' Picks: Robin Graubard', Artforum, April 3rd 2011

# ARTFORUM

## New York

CRITIC'S PICK

**Robin Graubard**

**WHITE COLUMNS**

**320 West 13th**



View of "Incomplete," 2011.

"Incomplete," Robin Graubard's latest solo exhibition, presents photographs as evidentiary information in a highly charged exploratory project. Most of the images depict teenagers in South Hadley, Massachusetts, where a high school student committed suicide in early 2010 after being bullied. Narratives underpinning the tragedy lie behind each image, but Graubard effectively sidesteps didactics for moody visual equivalents.

Graubard is not necessarily interested in her subject's secrets—like a parent, perhaps, she would rather just not know. She offers a view of adolescents that, refreshingly, doesn't fetishize their sublime bodies, but rather takes on their collective confinement. Yearbook photos recall mug shots, and softball dugouts evoke prison bars, barely containing the uniform/uniformed teens within. The most striking work in the show is *Incomplete*, 2010, a partial grid of seventeen furling black-and-white prints pinned to the wall—the formal outcasts that stand in opposition to the framed color photographs in the show. In one of the only direct references to the suicide, teenage girls are shown here being perp-walked to court, possibly for their role as bullies.

The exhibition is provocatively installed so as to highlight shifts in scale, printing techniques, and framing. These evoke the relevance of photographs as material objects, as much as the subject matter speaks to the exhibition's reigning theme of the consequences, and benefits, of nonconformity. To complement the haphazardly grouped images, there are photo-paper boxes stacked in a corner with decorative ribbon, a bag, floral fabric wrapped in plastic, and a monitor playing an excerpt from Robert Bresson's 1967 film *Mouchette*, which concludes with an adolescent suicide. These lend a transitory feeling that speaks directly to Graubard's interest in the chaos of adolescence and the transition to adulthood.