

Matthew Sleeth: *Rules to Live By*

October 27 - December 3, 2016

Australian artist Matthew Sleeth seeks to draw attention to how signs “program” us to behave in a prescribed manner. By adopting their form and aesthetic while misappropriating their ideology, Sleeth has constructed a series of sculptural works that question the dogma of a politically correct society. In *Rules to Live By*, the artist suggests we delve beyond superficiality for a deeper meaning in life. The texts featured in these works will be sourced from a combination of found, combined, appropriated or completely invented signs or instructions.



I WANT A PONY
steel, light globes, paint | 2016
26x52x4 inches | 66x132x10 cm

This new body of work builds directly from Sleeth’s pivotal installation *The Rise and Fall of Western Civilization (And other obvious metaphors)*, exhibited in the Gallery in 2011. This 120 foot, three-ton concrete and plywood sculpture, representing a freeway system arcing through space and rising from knee height to over 12 feet in the air with a road surface that is populated with various signs, images and objects. Inspired by the public response to the messages portrayed therein, Sleeth choose to expand on the irony of the impact mass media has on the population at large.

“Over many years I have explored concepts of ‘algorithmic control’ in my work” says Sleeth, “I have been particularly interested in signs as a cultural iconography; I am both seduced by their elegance and uneasy with their Orwellian effectiveness. These roadmaps of sorts are the rules we live by; they are the software that controls the way we negotiate our environment. I have long been fascinated by these sets of instructions that hold such sway over us. Why is it so difficult to ignore a sign?”

The contested behaviors being negotiated in each sign are either encouraged or discouraged by the assumptions embedded or coded in the text. Many of the conventions explored in these works depend on a range of cultural assumptions in order to function. Part of the rationale of this project is to make these assumptions visible through the process of pattern recognition within and between the insignias. The images in *Rules We Live By* appropriate the formal qualities and exacting methods of fabrication of their cultural referents. The viewer is meant to recognize the codes of persuasion being used in each work and how these refer to the social contexts from which they are drawn.



YOU GET THE ART YOU DESERVE
vinyl and PVC street sign, 2016
31.5x19.75 inches | 80x50 cm

Matthew Sleeth’s work is held in many public collections including The National Gallery of Australia, National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery of Victoria. Sleeth was named one of the Fifty Most Collectable Artists by Art Collector magazine. There have been six monographs published on the Artist’s work including “Ten Series/106 Photographs”, published by Aperture Foundation, NY. *Rules to Live By* is the Sleeth’s fourth solo exhibition with Claire Oliver Gallery.