

ICY SIGNS

Perfection is Standard, Mistakes Cost Extra

OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 16, 2013

OPENING RECEPTION: Thursday, October 24, 6–8PM

New York, NY Saturday, September 28th, 2013 -- Joshua Liner Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of the ICY Sign Shop with *Perfection is Standard, Mistakes Cost Extra*, featuring the skills of Justin Green, Matt Wright, Stephen Powers, Lew Blum, Dan Murphy, Alexis Ross, Sean Barton, and Mike Lee. This group of sign painters and artists have previously set up shop at the Coney Island boardwalk, on the streets of Johannesburg, and in the parking lot of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, among other likely and unlikely locations around the world. Joshua Liner Gallery is now hosting the most recent iteration of the shop for its return to Manhattan.

ICY Signs will convert the gallery into a workspace, hanging sign benches, setting up paint tables, and filling the walls with signs, as well as their own work, which draws on the vocabulary of traditional sign painting. During the course of the show, the space will accrue paint splatters, palleting marks, full ashtrays, empty pizza boxes and other detritus of the working process—hallmarks of a proper sign shop. The Chelsea shop will be an active workspace, with the ICY mechanics creating works in real time in the weeks following the opening.

At its current location, 72 Fourth Avenue in Brooklyn, the ICY shop produces signs for local businesses and serves as an open studio where passersby are invited to enter and witness the painting process first-hand. Beginning on October 24th, the opening of ICY Signs Chelsea will increase the reach of the ICY project, bringing hand-painted signage to a new neighborhood with the input and blessing of local residents.

In a recent interview, Powers said of his and the work of his co-workers:

“We want to make a mark on the landscape of New York. In the way that I did with graffiti, I want to do that now with painted signage—there’s just not enough of it. [...] I want chaos—I want the ninety-nine cent store to look the way it does, I want something crazy next door, and I want something even crazier down the block. That’s the way it should be. That’s the way it was a hundred, fifty, and twenty years ago and the city looked awesome for it.”

The work of ICY Signs and Stephen Powers is bringing this visual chaos and heterogeneity back to the streets through signage that both pays homage to and perverts traditional sign painting. They employ colors and fonts that add nuance to the meaning of the words presented, as well as ideograms and pictograms that suggest alternate readings of the literal messages. In a city that has gone the way of the chain store—where the blocks are cluttered with uniform awnings and vinyl lettering and classic signs are replaced or left to deteriorate—ICY’s job is to make the everyday interesting, and the interesting every day.

Beyond signs, the ICY sign mechanics each have a unique approach to making art from the sign trade. Dan Murphy makes work from the lowest currency in the sign game, adhesive vinyl on coroplast, and with those materials he reports on life in the street with a garage-psych eye. Matt Wright paints paper signs that mimic the form of cheery supermarket posters, but instead howl with pain, pathos and flat black humor. Mike Lee makes paintings of shapes that bypass Op art in pursuit of work that is line, color, math and harmony. Alexis Ross is a Gent of Desire who brings the Touch of Class aesthetic to life in his drawings. Lew Blum combines neon with an elegant Philadelphia tall print that takes the faith of graffiti to church. Sean Barton takes signs of no particular aesthetic value and replicates them in gold leaf, raising the mundane to the majestic. Finally, Justin Green is a legendary cartoonist and the original sign-painter-turned-artist. Green eschews art making for the monastic pursuit of benchwork and will be assisting Powers with his paintings. Powers makes work that inverts the sign vernacular, stripping out the commercial and inlaying the emotional. He paints epiphanies from everyday life, drawing on language and image to construct iconography that makes the personal universal and vice-versa.

Born in 1968 and currently based in New York City, Powers has exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2000), 49th Venice Biennale (2001), the Liverpool Biennial (2002), and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (2007). Powers has conducted high-profile public art projects such as Dreamland Artist Club at Coney Island (Creative Time, 2004), creating some 60 public signs with 40 other artists, as well as mural projects in Dublin and Belfast as a 2007 Fulbright Scholar. With the support of ICY Signs, Powers has worked on several adaptations of *A Love Letter For You* in Philadelphia (2009) funded by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, as well as São Paulo, Brazil (2010); Vardø, Norway (2012); Johannesburg, South Africa (2012); Brooklyn, New York (ongoing), and exhibited his first solo exhibition in seven years, *A Word is Worth a Thousand Pictures* (2012), at Joshua Liner Gallery.

ABOUT JOSHUA LINER GALLERY

Founded in 2008, Joshua Liner Gallery presents an exciting roster of established and emerging artists from North and South America, Asia, and Europe. The diverse program includes works in contemporary painting, sculpture, collage, mixed-media installation, and cross-disciplinary artistic practices. A gallery owner for over a decade, Joshua Liner marks his fifth year in New York City with a new, street-level exhibition space in the developing northern reach of the Chelsea Arts District.

CONTACT

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Gallery Hours

Tuesday — Saturday
11 — 6PM

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