

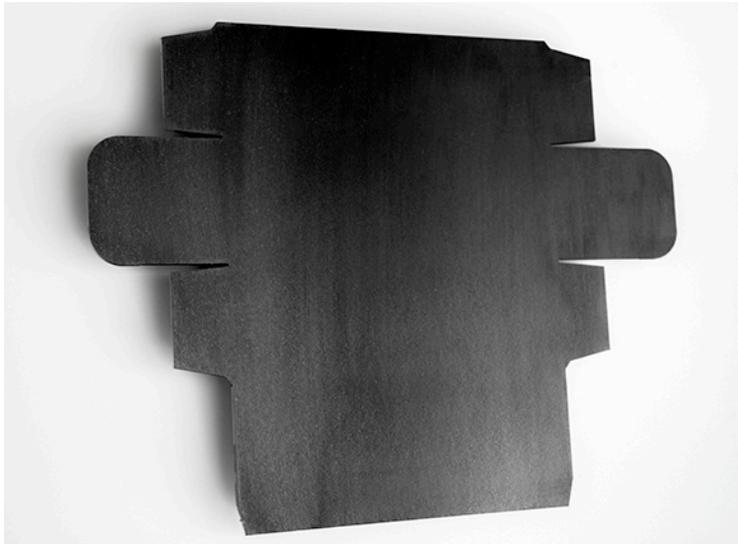
• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

**Joel Swanson: A.K.A.**

March 27 – April 25, 2015

Opening Reception: Friday, March 27, 2015, 7-9pm

Artist in attendance | Free and open to the public



*Phyto Intense Hydration Shampoo for Dry Hair*, 2015, steel, 6 x 7.75 inches (15.24 x 19.68 cm)

David B. Smith Gallery is pleased to announce Joel Swanson: *A.K.A.* featuring new works that continue to consider language as interface into our everyday lives. Culling content from comic books, air freshener scents, catalogs, and other branded packaging, Swanson's new bodies of work are at once familiar in their commonness and foreign in their new forms.

For his series *Color Poems*, Swanson takes pages from popular catalogs and edits out the visual information, leaving only the color descriptions such as "Rookwood Sash Green", "Fading Rose", "Pussywillow", and "Porpoise" thus highlighting the absurd nature of commercial design. These minimal works are printed to scale and the absence of imagery leaves the viewer to fill in the negative space with imaginative objects that may have once existed. Only in the titles of each piece does Swanson give away the details of what may have been available in "shoji white" or "daredevil". Similarly, in Swanson's brand new neon work he lists car freshener choices, arranging "Piña Colada, Wild Cherry, New Car" and other such scents vertically. He carefully considers these linguistic artifacts pulled from our everyday lives and demonstrates the laughable intentions in choosing an interior that smells like a sweet umbrella cocktail.

This examination into the role of naming objects and a description's relationship to consumerism plays out in other series in the exhibition such as "box patterns". In these monochromatic works, the packaging of an item (boots, over the counter headache medicine, etc.) is flattened and rendered unreadable. The abstract object on display reminds us of something we once opened, and the scale gives clues to its original intention, but the remainder is a meditation on naming/labeling as means to creating identity.

Lawrence Weschler's classic book on legendary artist Robert Irwin is titled "Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees". This title statement and sentiment rings throughout *A.K.A.* only in the reverse: what do we see when we have only a name? What do we see when we have no name? How does naming a thing create its very identity? And when we take the language out of its original context or intention how does our experience with that thing change?

**About the artist**

Joel Swanson is an artist, designer and writer who serves as the Director of Technology, Arts & Media Program at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He received his MFA in digital art at University of California, San Diego. Swanson's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally including a recent solo show at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, The Eli and Edythe Broad Museum, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery of Toronto, the North Miami Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Orange County Museum of Contemporary Art. Swanson has a solo exhibition forthcoming (Fall 2015) at the Museum of Outdoor Arts (Englewood, CO). This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

**About David B. Smith Gallery**

David B. Smith Gallery is committed to presenting intelligent and culturally relevant exhibitions in its Denver location, featuring the region's most important emerging talent alongside internationally recognized artists. Through its curatorial program, participation in art fairs, and extensive media coverage in publications such as *Art in America* and *ARTnews*, David B. Smith Gallery has cultivated a strong regional, national and international collector audience. *The New York Times* hailed the gallery as offering "an exciting contrast of cutting edge works." The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions.

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