

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

Joel Swanson
Sticks & Stones

August 18- September 16, 2017

Opening Reception: Friday, August 18, 2017, 7-9pm

Artist Talk: Friday, August 18, doors open at 6:30pm

Free and open to the public / Artist in Attendance

David B. Smith Gallery is pleased to present Joel Swanson's second solo exhibition with the gallery, *Sticks & Stones*. This exhibition comes during a tumultuous sociopolitical time. Inspired by current events, *Sticks & Stones* addresses language as a political act. Using words, phrases, and symbols, this exhibition makes material the typically intangible, but very real, use of language by public figures in today's politics and journalism. Swanson produces visual acts that subvert contemporary power structures and acknowledge a fluidity of interpretation to create something generative as opposed to destructive.

In *Sticks & Stones*, language functions as a performative gesture capable of defining one's own identity or calling out a societal attempt to define that of another. By reclaiming words used by contemporary leaders or citing aphorisms from childhood in neon and sculptural form, Swanson subverts meanings prescribed by society in favor of representing symbols of alterity as a form of resistance. Smearred newspaper headlines serve as public and personal targets of cultural obsession with bold media events, and call to attention the speed with which perception and memory surrounding monumental events are distorted. Ideologies, like language, are fluid and enlivened through action. The viewer takes part in this performance, standing in the presence of these physical manifestations of language. His or her own meaning is ascribed to these words and phrases, thus creating their own reality in the face of established definitions. New for Swanson, *Sticks & Stones* provides a semi-autobiographical perspective in addition to sociopolitical commentary.



Image: Joel Swanson, *Untitled*, 2017, lightjet print, 48 x 96 in.
(121.92 x 243.84 cm)

About Joel Swanson

Joel Swanson lives in Denver and works in Boulder, Colorado. Swanson explores the structure and technology of language, its materiality, modes of classification, and glitches in linguistic systems. His work ranges from digital art and sculpture, to interactive installations that playfully and powerfully merge words with meanings.

Swanson teaches courses on digital art, typography, and media theory at the University of Colorado. He received his Master of Fine Art at the University of California, San Diego with a focus in Computing and the Arts. His artwork has been exhibited nationally and internationally at institutions such as the Broad Museum in Lansing, The Power Plant in Toronto, and the North Miami Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2014 Swanson had a solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. Most recently he showed work in *Personal Structures*, an official satellite show of the 57th Venice Biennale.

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" and *The Denver Post* declared that it is the "premiere commercial space" in Denver. The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions.

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