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## Seeing Signs

SILAS MARDER GALLERY PRESENTS  
**RYAN MCGINNESS'S** LATEST SOLO  
 EXHIBIT, "SIGN TREES," A BOLD  
 TRIBUTE TO THE WAY WE  
 COMMUNICATE. BY COURTNEY BOWERS

Growing up, Ryan McGinness was first intrigued by graphic signs and logos used among Virginia Beach's skate and surf culture. "I noticed how [symbols] operated and served to increase the perceived value of what were otherwise ordinary objects," he says. "These images had a real transformative and almost magical quality. I wanted to know why."

After studying graphic design at Carnegie Mellon University, the same intrigue is evident in his professional work and is especially visible in his latest solo exhibit, "Sign Trees," opening August 1 at the Silas Marder Gallery. This series builds on McGinness's 2014 large-scale public installation, "Signs," featuring the artist's abstract interpretations of 50 street signs and commissioned by the New York City Department of Transportation.

The works comprising "Sign Trees" resemble overpopulated traffic signs adorned with McGinness's signature symbols that visually pop off their backgrounds, thanks to the bold red, black, and white color motif. "The drawings use the iconic visual language of signage, but instead of communicating blunt pedestrian information, they depict surreal personal narratives that provoke and invite investigation," explains McGinness. The pieces explore and build upon the artist's interest in the semantics of forms, the politics of representation, and the idea of style as a signifying practice.

The exhibit will also include five single paintings



Ryan McGinness's *Making Someone Else's Bed*, 2015, part of his "Sign Trees" exhibit at Silas Marder Gallery through August 29.

mounted on industrial armatures and three large "studio view" paintings on linen, all featuring a loud visual cacophony of bright colors and the same overpopulation of graphic symbols.

Riddled with contradictions and sentimental meaning, McGinness's work questions the definition of beauty, the interpretation of mundane imagery, and how symbolic language and universal iconography are used in today's mass culture and information age. "I want to assume the power of

creating these symbols—in which I am trained—to communicate more thoughtful and poetic notions," McGinness says. "Furthermore, I want to attribute those creations to a single human, as opposed to a state or corporation, who is responsible and accountable for those forms. These are the two key ingredients to art: universal concepts filtered through personal vision with authorship." "Sign Trees" runs through August 29, 120 Snake Hollow Road, Bridgehampton, 702-2306; silasmarder.com **H**