

Touchstones Nelson is pleased to present *Graham Gillmore: I love you, in theory*, the first exhibition of his work in the Kootenays. For the past ten years, Gillmore has been dividing his time between his studios in Winlaw and New York City, vacillating, as he states, “between the centre of the universe and the middle of nowhere”. Due to his international significance as an artist, his work is primarily shown in large urban centres. Local audiences haven't had the opportunity to see his work in person, until now.

I love you, in theory brings together a diverse collection of works completed over the past 21 years. Those familiar with Gillmore's work will recognize his signature font engraved in the piece *Zero Intent on Forthrightly Answering any Stained-Family-Linen Type Questions*, the title an affront against the personal narrative that is prevalent in much of his work. *Good Review Bad Review* features his other signature style of loosely written lettering, executed “as if painted by the trunk of a baby elephant learning how to spell”.¹ What might come as a surprise are Gillmore's rarely exhibited sculptures made from found objects, and his delicate drawings scratched onto paper and enamel-coated boards, which were seminal in the development of his large engraved panel pieces.

Gillmore's aesthetic influences are a confluence of abstract expressionism, pop art and graffiti. The seductive surfaces of his panels are akin to the poured paint canvases of Morris Louis, and the naive, rough line quality of his works on canvas and paper are reminiscent of Jean-Michel Basquiat. This comes as no surprise, considering Gillmore was “spellbound” after attending Basquiat's 1985 exhibition at the Mary Boone gallery in New York.

Gillmore's use of text is based on his desire to tell stories. However, the stories he conveys are far from didactic. The fragmented messages relayed in his work often contain an ironic, circular logic. His masterful manipulation of clichés and idioms move the work from personal narrative to a more collective context. Gillmore's work dwells in the interchange between hope and doubt, tragedy and comedy. The tactless, stabbing statement *I Love You, In Theory*, displayed with *Two Left Feet*, is a prime example of Gillmore's use of searing humour, wit and irreverence to transform pain. As writer Tom Breidenbach states, for all of Gillmore's “inside jokes”, the humour or torment could be anybody's.”²

Jessie Demers
Curator

1 Rand, William. In conversation with Gillmore.

2 Breidenbach, Tom. (2008). *Graham Gillmore*. Madrid: Galeria Fucares

Biography

Gillmore's career began in Vancouver, during his graduating year at Emily Carr College of Art and Design in 1985. At that time he joined with fellow Emily Carr students Attila Richard Lukacs, Angela Grossmann and Derek Root to form the artist's collective *Futura Bold*. After their first exhibition, the Vancouver Art Gallery organized the legendary *Young Romantics* exhibition which featured *Futura Bold*, along with 4 other artists. The following year, Gillmore moved to New York City. In 1992 his international career was effectively launched after prominent Italian art dealer Gian Enzo Sperone visited Gillmore's studio and bought everything he had. Gillmore's work is currently represented by galleries in Vancouver, Toronto, New York, Milan, Madrid, Mexico City, and San Francisco. His paintings can also be found in the collections of numerous public art galleries, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York.