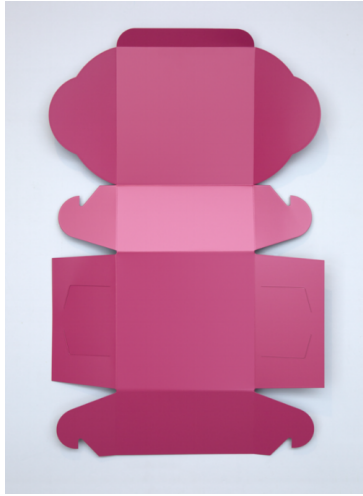


FORT GANSEVOORT



Sylvan Lionni

Goodbye Stranger

Opening On:

Wednesday, January 24, 6 – 8 PM

January 24 - February 24, 2018

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons — T.S.Eliot

Anyone familiar with the work of Sylvan Lionni will be interested to see his recent transformations of common objects at his first solo exhibition at Fort Gansevoort opening January 24, 2018. Cake boxes, toilet stalls and paintings have been carefully produced and transformed with minimal changes from what one can imagine was their original state and purpose.

Lionni's curiously shaped Totem series are reproductions of unfolded cake boxes, produced in steel and unfolded to their original flatter die-cut forms leaving tabs and fold lines exposed. The resulting silhouetted forms reveal their most conspicuous feature: a bilateral symmetry that gives them an undeniable sectioned, totemic appearance which ultimately provided Lionni with the title for this series. However, the unfolded boxes also conjure the origins of the mass production of modern packaging which we have become all too familiar with. The folded carton was invented in Brooklyn in the mid nineteenth century, and quickly became an inexpensive way to package common goods in a more attractive way. The invention of mass produced packaging ultimately sparked the beginnings of what we have come to understand as a disposable culture.

Another series of works involve the reproduction and disorientation of another modern invention: the common public toilet stall. In this series Lionni dislodges the functional ubiquity of the modern pref-fab enclosures by compressing the width of the interior, vertical space by half, and tipping them back onto the floor horizontally. In this orientation, the converted horizontal stalls not only lose their primary function of privacy, but also the compressed spatial interior of the stalls no longer allows room for bodily movement. The conventional use of the stalls appear to have been subverted—the pre-fabricated forms lose their intended purpose and seem more fitting for a public morgue than a public toilet.

Also included in the exhibition are Lionni's dark monochrome Dust Paintings. It is tempting to associate these works with the familiar history of American abstract and minimalist painting, or perhaps to engage in the well worn discussion of the end-game of painting itself. However, close observation reveals a light layer of paint dust that dims the original sheen of the dark painting. Alongside the cast-off appearance of the Totem and Stall works, Lionni's Dust Paintings also appear resurrected and adrift in their own aftermath—the paintings worn dusty appearance also evoke a similar discarded, quality. Yet paradoxically, as much as Lionni's paintings seem to abdicate from the spectacle of modern painting, they also cannot escape from its trajectory. Throughout this exhibition the proximity of these dust paintings next to the repurposed and abandoned, modernist forms of mass produced, die cut cake boxes and tipped over toilet stalls, seem to pull the high art painting into the fray of modernity's collapse.

Sylvan Lionni was born in Cuckfield, England in 1973. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts in 1995 and a Master of Fine Arts from Bard College in 1999. He has had recent solo exhibitions at Kansas Gallery, New York; Taubert Contemporary, Berlin; and Stene Projects, Stockholm. Lionni's work has been included in exhibitions at The Brooklyn Museum of Art, MoMA P.S. 1, and mumok. His work is represented in many private, corporate, and public collections including General Dynamics Corporation, The Daimler Art Collection, Johns Hopkins Children's Center, and The National Public Art Council in Stockholm, Sweden. He is represented by Taubert Contemporary in Berlin and Stene Projects in Stockholm.