

MARK KELNER

Dollar City

MARK KELNER'S PRACTICE documents and distorts imagery ranging from art history to pop culture to reveal their inherent and hard-to-see contradictions as familiar symbols of contemporary life: their false representation of ideas and their role as false idols propping up a system of consumerism where things and people are commodities.

"Dollar City" alludes to the visual culture that defines the concepts of American capitalism and the meaning of "Americanization" – each simultaneously in opposition and symbiosis with one other. At the same time, "Dollar City" functions as a trick mirror refracting reality to enable the viewer to see and sense the often invisible socioeconomic and cultural elements of control embedded within the contemporary urban landscape and the built environment.

At their heart, these paintings are about sloganeering and propaganda. In the twilight of a

reality TV presidency, Kelner argues that phrases such as "In God We Trust" and "We the People" have long-ceased to reflect the ideals of our national identity, but are merely empty filler for sound bites.

Rather, it is the ubiquitous signage that screams out empty words and promises that serve a higher purpose in promoting the very idea of commerce and salesmanship as to how we define what American slogans are right now. "Dollar City" offers markers of how we see ourselves and what attracts us to the latest opening, closing, clearance, or sale.

Proclamations of "Going Out of Business," "Fast Cash Loans," "Last 3 Days," and "Everything Must Go," among others, are reimagined as both near-to-real signs and as fine art. Yet, in either form, they are painted to induce desire, while commenting on contemporary advertising jargon, typography, and design.

"Those who are advantaged by the status quo are continually at work to make us understand that the way things are is the way things should be. And thus, the ways in which we understand the world are very much connected to the ways in which we interact with the world."

– Noam Chomsky, *Consequences of Capitalism: Manufacturing Discontent and Resistance*

"If you're not first, you're last!"

– Ricky Bobby, *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*

EXHIBITION VIEWS: BEACON GALLERY, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



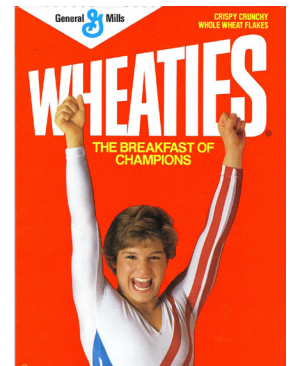
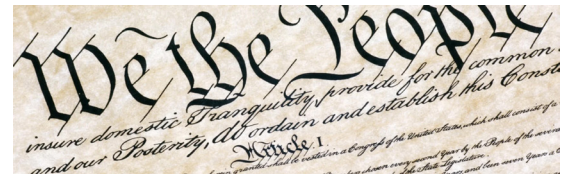
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



INSTALLATION VIEW: WASHINGTON DC



AMERICAN SLOGANS



STUDIO VIEW



PANEL TALK (click image to view video)



“The Cultural and Artistic Landscape of Signs,” October 28, 2021
Artist Mark Kelner; photographer Geoff Hargadon; Beacon Gallery director Christine O’Donnell, independent curator Anna Winestein.

SELECTED WORKS (ALL ACRYLIC ON CANVAS)



Beauty Supply
42 × 29 inches, 2020



Blow Out Sale
47 × 26 inches, 2021



Buy One Get One Free
52 × 39 inches, 2021



Compro Oro
51 × 25 inches, 2020



CVS Diptych, (Ode to Helvetica)
40 × 52 inches, 2019



Daily Instant Lotto
43 × 21 inches, 2020



Everything Must Go
36 × 27 inches, 2021



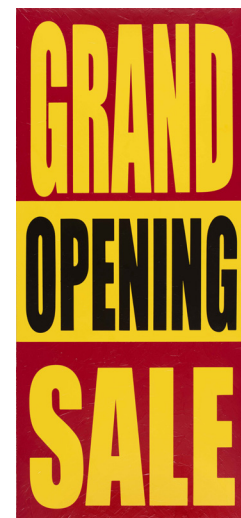
Fast Cash Loans
43 × 28 inches, 2021



Girls Girls Girls
47 × 30 inches, 2021



Going Out of Business
45 × 31 inches, 2021



Grand Opening Sale
57 × 25 inches, 2020



Jumbo Slice
37 × 25 inches, 2020



Last Three Days
36 × 29 inches, 2021



Mattress Sale
51 × 31 inches, 2020



No Money Down
43 × 24 inches, 2021



Our Biggest Clearance
42 × 30 inches, 2021



Pawn Shop
46 × 26 inches, 2021



Pay Bail Bondsman
40 × 22 inches, 2021



Psychic
37 × 31 inches, 2021



XXX
44 × 32 inches, 2021