

# denver life

Colorado's leading lifestyle magazine

## 17 MILE HIGH MUSEUMS

With more doors now open to the public, Denver's robust arts and culture scene is booming. To help you tap into the true pulse of what's out there, check out this in-depth Colorado spotlight. PG. 52



### POP OF COLOR

This impressive painting can be viewed in the exhibition *Stories We Tell: The Collection Two Ways* at the Clyfford Still Museum. (Oil on canvas, 109 x 93 1/8 in.)

JUNE 2021

PLEASE DISPLAY UNTIL 07.05.2021 \$4.95



denverlifemagazine.com

### FUR FRIENDLY

Find out what Colorado's best pet products are when it comes to supplements and holistic nutrition.

### GOT ALLERGIES?

If you're sick and tired of an itchy nose and the sniffles, Dr. Erik Vanderlip's tips and tricks will help.

### DELICIOUS DELI

With the warm weather upon us it's time to try new things, like summer sandwiches at Tessa Delicatessen.

**ALLEY ARTWORK** THE "YOURS" INSTALLATION IN DENVER URGES PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT ALLEYWAYS AS PUBLIC SPACES AND THE ROLE THAT LANGUAGE PLAYS.

artistic expression

## Joel Swanson

WHEN AN ARTIST IS ALSO A WORDSMITH.

by Kerrie Lee Brown

When asked what kind of artist he is, Joel Swanson says his medium is actually words—as his artwork explores language. Swanson likes to take familiar words or phrases and make them seem odd or strange by tweaking something simple. In other words, (excuse the pun) his masterpieces can take on many forms—from paper to digital to large public artworks.

### Where did you go to school?

"I was born outside of Chicago and grew up on the coast of Lake Michigan, so I am a mid-westerner at heart and love being by water. When I moved to Colorado I was thrilled to discover that snow is basically frozen water, so I get my water fix through snowboarding. I earned my BFA in digital art at the University of Colorado Boulder and my MFA in Computing and the Arts from the University of California, San Diego. After grad school, I was offered a teaching position back at the University of Colorado Boulder and I jumped at the opportunity. While at CU, I was a program director for many years, designed a new major and minor (Creative Technology and Design in the ATLAS institute), and created a handful of courses that explore the intersection art and technology."

### What is your creative process?

"Given my interest in language, my creative process is fueled by reading and looking at language within the world. I'm equally inspired by French post-structural theory as I am road signs. When I get an idea for a project I will do a quick sketch or mock something up in Photoshop and pin it to my studio wall. Sometimes those ideas will resolve themselves quickly into a finished concept. Other times they will wait and 'bake' on the wall for years. My studio is like a snapshot of the inside of my brain, but I get ideas for work by being out in the world."

### What was the thought behind the YOURS installation?

"I was approached by Cortney Stell of Black Cube Nomadic Museum and the Downtown Denver Partnership to do an installation in an alleyway as part of their Happy Cities initiative. I really like doing installations in unique places because the context and location become such an integral and active part of the work. For this piece I was interested in alleyways as liminal places. Who really owns alleys? Who feels comfortable there? I wanted to make a light based work that would illuminate and question the idea of ownership in these spaces. I love working with pronouns because many of them are the same word with a letter or two added to create their opposite (YOURS/OURS, HERE/THERE, HE/SHE). I hope this piece makes people think about alleyways as public spaces, but also about the role that language plays in creating ideas of ownership and territory."

### What is your advice for aspiring artists?

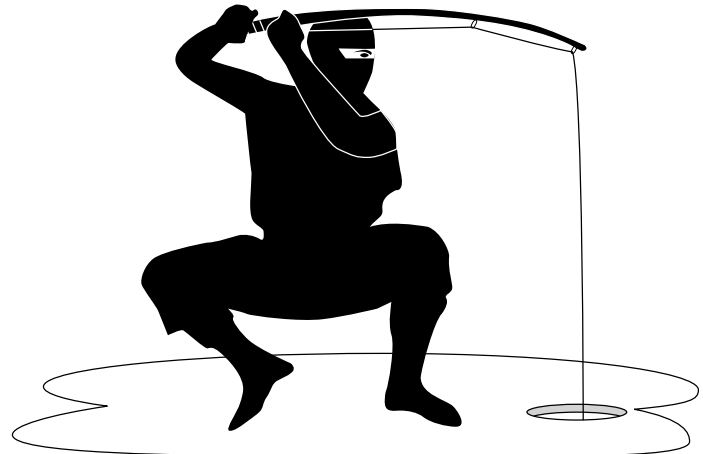
"Being an artist is a difficult career choice. You are constantly putting your work out there and artists inevitably deal with a lot of rejection. My advice for aspiring artists is to fall in love with the practice of making art. If at the end of the day you still love making art, then you are succeeding. Highs and lows will come and go, but we have to love the act of making art first and foremost." **DLM**



**JOEL SWANSON**

joelericswanson.com | @Joel.swanson

© 2021 HAPA RESTAURANTS



FRESH FISH ALL WINTER LONG.



DENVER CHERRY CREEK  
3030 E 2ND AVENUE  
303.322.9954

BOULDER PEARL STREET MALL  
1117 PEARL STREET  
303.473.4730

LANDMARK  
5380 GREENWOOD PLAZA BLVD.  
303.267.8744

LODO  
1514 BLAKE STREET  
720.354.5058



**BREAKFAST · LUNCH · DINNER · COCKTAILS**

**PANZANO**

909 17TH ST 303.296.3525 PANZANO-DENVER.COM PANZANODENVER