

I-70 Sign Show
Karl Haendel: "Plow Pose"

The [I-70 Sign Show](#) is pleased to announce the installation of a new billboard work by Los Angeles-based artist Karl Haendel. "Plow Pose" (2015)—a close-cropped black-and-white photograph of a man doing yoga—continues the project's commentary on cultural and political messages along the Missouri interstate. Produced specifically for the Sign Show, Haendel's piece engages I-70 themes including lifestyle, athletics, gender, and, more subtly, religion.

With its ambiguous composition, "Plow Pose" invites viewers to question commercial representations of the human body: is the man restrained by or bursting from the confined space? The yoga content is dually subversive: Its depiction of male athleticism is unexpected compared to signage for sports or the military. Its reference to Eastern spirituality offers a rare counterpoint to the interstate's many ads for Christian values and institutions.

Launched in April 2014, the Sign Show capitalizes on Missouri's billboard surplus (five times the national average) and engages the provocative, if often inadvertent, "red-versus-blue" issue conversation along the 250 miles between St. Louis and Kansas City. Each Sign Show artwork debuts on the project's main billboard in the rural heart of the state, situated on the property of a family farming business. When artworks rotate off the main board, they move to a second "satellite" location. The satellite board, different for each artist, allows the reading of the artworks to shift with changes in landscape, architecture, population, and surrounding billboard messages.

On the main board until May, "Plow Pose" converses with its neighboring sign for a strip-club ad featuring a silhouetted female pole dancer. The pairing addresses the purpose and presentation of physical movement and contortion in terms of gender and social class. Haendel's image also speaks to its agricultural site, given the relationship between yoga poses and animals, plants, and tools: an image of a man doing the "plow" looms over a soybean field and state-of-the-art farming equipment.

The Sign Show has featured works by Kay Rosen, Mel Bochner, Mickalene Thomas, Kim Beck, and Ken Lum. Lum's diptych for the project, "Bindy Sangeet: Employee of the Month / Alia Naffouj: Hooked on Tennis" (2015), is the current satellite billboard. The Sign Show is made possible with funding from the University of Missouri and support from DDI Media.

For further information, please contact project founder and curator Anne Thompson at anne@i70signshow.org