

Thomas Erben Gallery



Democracy I, 1945/2015
21 ¼ x 21 5/8 in.
19th C. oil on canvas, mounted on masonite with inlays

Stefan Sagmeister

Beautiful Numbers
April, 10 - May, 15

Stefan Sagmeister is a New York based designer (b. 1962, Bregenz, Austria) whose philosophically driven, unconventional approach to his profession – and often status quo upending inventiveness paired with masterful execution – has earned him international recognition with major institutions exhibiting his work.

As a testimony to the extent to which Sagmeister is willing to question his own assumptions, he used himself as the investigator and the investigated in *The Happy Film* (2016) which is about one artist's search for bliss and the quagmires it led to. It is an intensely personal search in which he sets up three methods for himself to find happiness through meditation, therapy and psychopharmaca, grading himself along the way.

Beautiful Numbers, Sagmeister's new body of work, was conceived in 2020 as the daily lived experience – and short term media – reflected a world seemingly out of control, with democracy in peril, ubiquitous conflicts and an overall outlook of doom. Instead of focusing on attention catching daily headlines, the long term perspective – the only way making sense – shows actual improvement: there is less war, hunger and illiteracy; fewer people die in natural disasters, more people live in democracies, an increased number of women serve on Parliaments, and life expectancy has increased.

Sagmeister has visualized data collected over 100 years and transformed these graphs into inlaid 19th Century genre paintings, embroidered canvases, lenticular prints and hand painted water glasses – all of which will be for the first time on display at the gallery.

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Stefan Sagmeister received his MFA from the University of Applied Arts in Vienna (MAK) and, as a Fulbright Scholar, a master's degree from Pratt Institute in New York.

Sagmeister formed the New York based Sagmeister, Inc. in 1993 and has since designed for clients as diverse as the Guggenheim Museum, the Rolling Stones and HBO. Having been nominated eight times, he finally won two Grammy awards for his design work with the Talking Heads and Brian Eno & David Byrne. He has also earned practically every important international design award.

His multimedia exhibitions have been exhibited widely in museums and galleries, including the **Venice Biennale** in 2018. *The Happy Show*, for example, originated in 2012 at the **ICA Philadelphia**, and travelled to the **Design Exchange**, Toronto, as well as **MoCA LA**, Pacific Design Center (both 2013). **The Mak**, Vienna, organized *The Beauty Show* in 2018, conjointly with the **Museum für Angewandte Kunst**, Frankfurt, with subsequent stops at **Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe**, Hamburg (2020) and **Fondation Martell**, Cognac (2021).

Over the years, other venues included **Maat**, Lisbon (2018); **Museum of Vancouver** (2015); **Chicago Cultural Center**; **Jewish Museum**, New York (both 2013); **Israel Museum**, Jerusalem (2010); **Deitch Projects**, New York (2008); **Wolfsonian**, Miami (2007); and **Zeroone Design Center**, Seoul (2004).

His work is in the collections of **MoMA**, New York, the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**, **Art Institute of Chicago**, **SFMoMA**, as well as many other international institutions.

He teaches in the graduate department of the School of Visual Art in New York and lectures extensively internationally.