The billboard is a vernacular format that the Cuban-born American artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957–1996) repurposed in an effort to engage diverse audiences and expand the public function of art. "I need the public to complete the work," he stated, "to become part of my work, to join in." This fall, the Museum has installed one of Gonzalez-Torres's billboards in twelve locations around the greater Princeton area, including the plaza just outside its front door.

Created at the height of the AIDS crisis, the billboards feature a haunting image of an unmade bed, empty but for the indentations left by two absent bodies. The meaning is dependent upon the viewer's own memories or expectations of happiness and frustration, loss and desire. Any and all possibilities are conceivable. By using an advertising convention—the billboard—to encourage a viewer's public reckoning with his or her own private experience, the artist seeks to disrupt the already precarious boundaries between the public and private realms.

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