



ARTWORK **STARE DECISIS** | LIFE | LIBERTY | PURSUIT

ARTIST **MATTHEW RITCHIE**

INSTALLED 2006  
WAYNE LYMAN MORSE U.S. COURTHOUSE  
EUGENE, OREGON

Matthew Ritchie creates modern-day versions of the narrative painting and sculpture cycles that have long been essential components of great civic architecture. In that tradition, Ritchie telescopes time, place, and various types of information to establish a dense network of meaning and potential discovery in his work. For his project at the courthouse designed by Morphosis, Ritchie interweaves references to the natural environment of Oregon and the history of law in his sculpture and murals.

The serpentine form of *Stare Decisis*, echoing an abstracted map of the Willamette River system, winds its way from the rooftop outside the courtrooms into the interior of the building. The title of sculpture refers to the underlying principle of American law: *stare decisis* literally means “stand by that which is decided” and expresses the notion that prior court decisions must be recognized as precedent. The map is overlaid with text citing the precedents for the U.S. Constitution. It is supported by staffs, some topped with heads portraying historical contributors to the legal system, others empty to signify the collective, and often anonymous, development of the law. The concentric three-dimensional elements are “atoms of law” with rings numbering the articles and amendments of the Constitution. Their locations correspond to the largest cities and towns in Oregon.

In addition to *Stare Decisis*, Ritchie created a group of three large-scale illuminated murals that surround the sculpture. Individually titled *Life*, *Liberty*, and *Pursuit*, they take their names from the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Each of the murals—which are aluminum-framed lightboxes divided into sections, with multiple colored images on printed film mounted on lenticular panels—fuses the history and landscape of Oregon with an alternate abstract landscape embodying the more than four-thousand-year-long evolution of the idea of law. The story of America and the state of Oregon is joined to the story of the world, overlaid with diagrams and writing that imply some of the relationships among

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historical, legal, ethical, and moral concepts that are the generators of contemporary law making and interpretation. The images offer a rich and textured visual experience that dynamically combines diverse knowledge systems, beliefs, and geographies. JG

**Matthew Ritchie** was born in London in 1964 and now lives in New York. He attended Boston University and the Camberwell School of Art in London, from which he earned a BFA in 1986. Individual exhibitions of Ritchie's work include *Matthew Ritchie: Proposition Player* (2003-04) organized by the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, which also traveled to the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams; *Concentrations 38: Matthew Ritchie* (2001) at the Dallas Museum of Art; *The Fast Set* (2000) at the Miami Museum of Contemporary Art; and *The Big Story* (1999) at the Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art. Among the many group exhibitions that have included Ritchie's work are *In the Beginning: Artists Respond to Genesis* (2008) at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco; *Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing* (2005) at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; and *010101: Art in Technological Times* (2001) at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Ritchie's other public commissions include *Games of Chance and Skill* (2002) for the Albert and Barrie Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge and *The Deep Six* (2002) at Shiodome City Center in Tokyo. Ritchie is also creating a second GSA commission for the Food and Drug Administration building in Silver Spring, Maryland.

*STARE DECISIS*

MEDIUM ALUMINUM AND STEEL

DIMENSIONS 97 FT 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN X 38 FT 2 IN X 4 FT 1 IN





*LIFE, LIBERTY, AND PURSUIT*

MEDIUM DURATRANS MOUNTED ON LENTICULAR ACRYLIC PANELS,  
ALUMINUM FRAME, AND FLUORESCENT LIGHTS

DIMENSIONS *LIFE*, 52 FT 5 IN X 8 FT 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN X 8 IN  
*LIBERTY*, 44 FT 5 IN X 8 FT 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN X 8 IN  
*PURSUIT*, 44 FT 5 IN X 8 FT 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN X 8 IN

