



Matt Keegan

Matt Keegan is a Brooklyn-based artist whose work addresses the complexities of language and cognition, and is often informed by personal narratives that illuminate larger socio-political histories. As an interdisciplinary practitioner, his work is made in a variety of media including steel sculpture, photography, video, and printmaking. Keegan's exhibitions are frequently accompanied by artist publications that extend the show's formal thinking and research. Publication-making has also been an ongoing part of the artist's practice for over a decade.

Keegan's work has been widely exhibited internationally in venues including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New Museum, Bard CCS Hessel Museum (all New York), The Kitchen, Sculpture Center, the Guggenheim Museum (NY, Bilbao and Berlin), Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Grazer Kunstverein (Graz, Austria), ICA Boston, the Columbus Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, The Henry Art Gallery (Seattle), and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts (Cambridge, Mass) where his 2016 video *Generation*, traveled after its 2017 debut at Participant Inc., in NYC. Keegan's first monograph, *OR*, was co-published by Inventory Press in conjunction with his 2015 solo show, "Portable Document Format" at Rogaland Kunstsenter, Stavanger, Norway. Keegan is the co-founding editor and publisher of *North Drive Press* (2004-2010) and founding editor of *==* (2012 and 2016).

His work is represented in numerous museum and private collections worldwide, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, The Annette and Peter Nobel Collection, Zurich, The Alford Collection of Contemporary Art at Rollins College, Winter Park,



Circulatory (Quilt), 2019

collage on paper with gouache and Flashe
127 × 97 cm | 135 × 106 cm (framed)



Exhibition view *Recycle* at Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2020



2 Gallons of milk, 2019
single channel video
1' 08"



Circulatory (Surplus), 2019
collage on paper with gouache and Flashe
127 x 97 cm | 135 x 106 cm (framed)

Matt Keegan: Recycle
Contemporânea, Ed. 01-02-03, 2020
Cristina Sanchez-Kozyreva

It was a week after Matt Keegan opened his solo exhibition in Lisbon, *Recycle*, at Pedro Cera gallery on March 6, and he was answering to my questions by e-mail from his home in New York.

“For the work included in “Recycle,” I’m less interested in highlighting the personal experience, and more interested in the way images from popular culture were used by my mother to teach English. Her 400 + double sided flashcards present images that serve as an archival snapshot of middle-class aspiring America in the 1990s. Coincidentally, this is a time in which the middle class began to become weaker. In terms of art, I’m interested in this collection’s relationship to the Pictures Generation. My mother is not an artist, and although there are various creative decisions that she made to create her flashcards, they are emphatically tools for learning.”

Alas the show wouldn’t stay open for long, soon the Portuguese government declared a state of emergency in response to the propagation of the Covid-19. It is only now that it is reopening, and thankfully with an extended closing date—until the end of May. On show at the gallery, twelve works made between 2007 and 2020, including video, paper collage with gouache and flashe vinyl paint, prints on aluminium, and a framed C-Print.

Despite the flat whiteness of the gallery and the more or less two-dimensional quality of the works, they are rather invasive, with striking colours and a certain sense of agitation. Grids of visuals elements compete through colour and visual cues, not only aesthetically, but they seem to be carrying information, as if different sets of puzzles were mixed together. The louder, a series of four collages that make *Circulatory* (Meat, Quilt, Surplus, Head to toe, all 2019), each consist

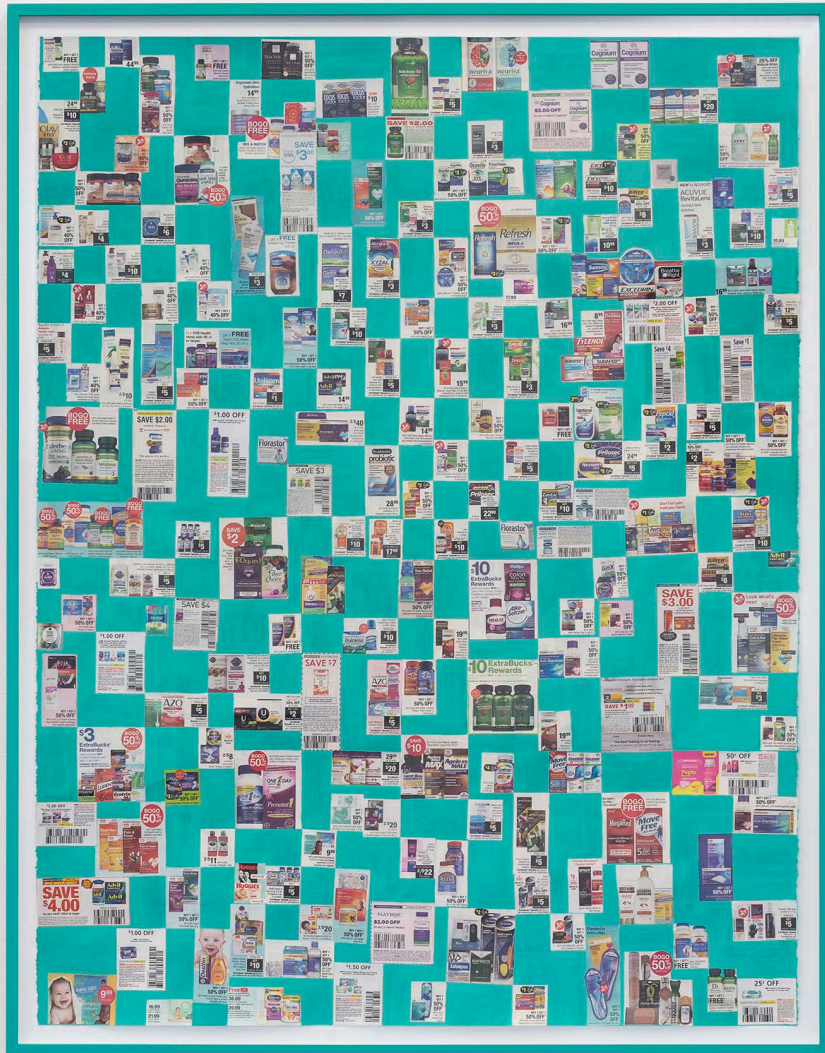


College graduate, 2019

single channel video
1' 08”

of a grid of cut outs from advertising material, the kind you get in your mail box from your closest groceries stores with all the promotions and special prices. The items contrast with bright coloured backgrounds, pink, green, yellow. Apparently these collages were the fastest to make, while the videos and aluminium works required more planning and development time.

In that quoted email, Keegan was referring to the original set of ESL (English as a second language) flashcards made by his mother to teach evening ESL classes in Long Island, New York, from the early ‘90s to the early 2000s. He found more than four hundred double sided flashcards in a closet in his mother house. She had created the flashcards by cutting out images from magazines and other widely circulated printed material, including advertising. Like a resourceful teacher would, she used what was available, but at the same time, she visually crystallised 90s media representations of people and things, adding to them her



Circulatory (Head to toe), 2019

collage on paper with gouache and Flashe
127 × 97 cm | 135 × 106 cm (framed)



Circulatory (Meat), 2019

collage on paper with gouache and Flashe
127 × 97 cm | 135 × 106 cm (framed)

subjective choices in associating one found image to a word from the curriculum. Not all of the associations are directly illustrative, some perhaps demanding more subjectivity from the student, which is a common experience for anyone who had to learn a foreign language at some point in life. An experience however more memorable for who had to do so as an immigrant starting a new life—which was exactly Keegan’s mother audience. Keegan mentioned the Pictures Generation group also, thus hinting, on the one hand, at an artistic practice that reveals the fabrication inherent to mass media images (and how it carries stereotypes or particular agendas), and on the other, the relinquishing of authorship by the artist, perhaps even encouraging a chain of appropriations.

Part of Keegan’s research consists in foraging for images online. He said he was buying magazines from 1996 on eBay (a year he’s particularly interested in) when he found the original milk ad his mother used for making one of her flashcards. *2 Gallons of milk* (2019) is a short video featuring two full jugs of milk with blue screw caps on a table with some cherry tomatoes on the side, and light coming from a window projected on a soft blue-coloured wall. In the gallery space, the milk becomes the subject of a sensual video still life, with droplets of condensation forming on the jugs, that reforms the milk gallons from their past lives, one as visual aids to learn American English, another as the subject of a commercial for the American Plastic Council. On show, three other videos originated from found ESL cards (all 2019, all 1’8”long), and were chosen by Keegan for they belong to different categories among the ESL set (though those categories such as “auto/biography”, “diversity” or “still life” seem to have a classification of their own). At the entrance of the gallery *Ready for Work*, is a video greeting visitors with a corporate-America-groomed young man putting on socks. On the back wall of the gallery space is

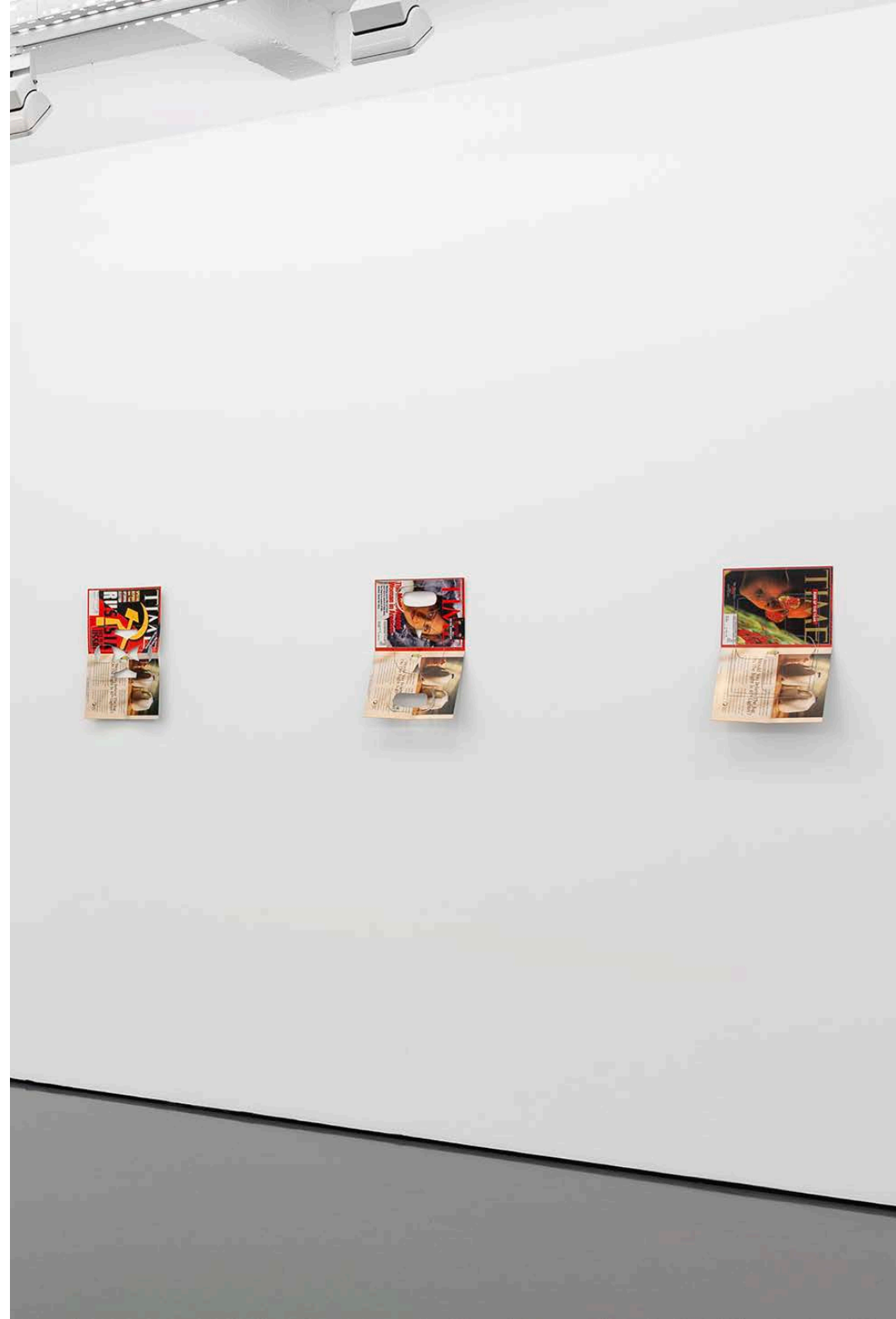
College Graduate, a video portraying a Latina grandma and her grand daughter, as she apparently just graduated and there is cake. In *Fellow Travelers* Keegan’s camera portrays one by one a heterogeneous group of New York subway passengers, and ends it with a written list of labels. Archetypal, those are *Do-Good Bluebloods* (must be that elegant and severe, bourgeois white lady) or Indian Hipsters (must be this one wearing a sari). But the more cryptic descriptions on the list, those not entirely based on race or appearance such as “Lingering Liberals” or *Crash-Course Americans* make you question these cliché-based associations. Touché, although summing the U.S. (or New York for that matter) up to milk, Wall Street, the Subway, and Latino emigrants seems like an attractive descriptive start, a place and its evolving culture is certainly more layered, inconsistent, and made of too many exceptions.

Based in Brooklyn, not only he works as an artist, making sculptures and multimedia installations, photographs, videos, and text-based works, but he also writes and publishes. Two of his publishing projects are == (equal, equal), a curatorial project in print of sorts, and *North Drive Press* (an annual publication co-founded with childhood friend Lizzy Lee) also with multiples, interviews, and texts—and collaboratively minded.

His varied activities, often of a collaborative nature—including family members, mum, dad, nephew...— and with straightforward links to his surroundings, make of Keegan an involved city dweller and member of the communities surrounding him, and that is, by extension an involved New Yorker. Interestingly, for his first show in Lisbon at Pedro Cera Gallery in 2013, he involved Helena Cardoso, the mother of artist friend Ana Cardoso, who gave him the opportunity to create a specific relationship with Lisbon:

Building a bridge of sort, it underlines that Keegan’s artistic strategy includes connecting with a location, and involving close people—and words of course. This time, although the show is a portemanteau selection of several of his projects, rather than a curatorial tight ready readable package, Keegan is able to share with the Lisbon audience something from home, from his ongoing research, and his experimentations.

Three works shown together as a series (all are print on cut-out aluminium, all dated 2020 but referring to the year 1996—the year Clinton won the American presidential elections—all are titled *Clockwise*) represent spreads (front and back page) of New York-based weekly Time magazine. *Clockwise* (5/27/96) corresponds to the magazine’s May 27th, 1996 issue. The front page announces a special report on the upcoming Russian elections (Boris Yeltsin became president in July). The back page is a commercial from the American Plastic Council (you know, those above mentioned milk gallons). *Clockwise* (10/14/96) and *Clockwise* (12/30/96) respectively highlight American working mums for their decisive role in the then upcoming American elections, and AIDS researcher Dr. David Ho as Time’s man of the year in a special double issue. Coincidentally about the latter, I found this quote when researching for this article by then Time’s editor Philip Elmer-De Witt: “Some ages are defined by their epidemics”. Ho would remain the only medical person honoured this way until, in 2014, the magazine accoladed Ebola Fighters (let’s see who they choose this year). Keegan couldn’t have known about the sudden propagation of Covid-19, but just as his exhibition is titled *Recycle*, old and new continually follow one another. Language evolve, but some stereotypes and ideas stay, although sometimes it helps to defuse them by exposing their origins. Keegan fans our awareness of the many possible ramifications images and words have, and considering our information saturated world, it seems like a good skill



Exhibition view *Recycle* at Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2020



Clockwise (10/14/96), 2020
 dye sublimation print on aluminum
 27 × 41 × 8 cm



Clockwise (5/27/96), 2020
 dye sublimation print on aluminum
 27 × 41 × 8 cm



Exhibition view *Recycle* at Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2020

Banner Year
X-TRAonline, February 15, 2021
Megan Milks

Artist Matt Keegan's new book *1996* is an idiosyncratic close study of one pivotal year in politics, activism, and art. Edited by Svetlana Kitto and co-published by Inventory Press and New York Consolidated, *1996* explores artistic formation in the context of the Democratic Party's slide to the right in the 1990s. The book brings together interviews with two generations of artists—those who completed their undergraduate studies and voted for Bill Clinton in 1996, such as Chitra Ganesh, Elisabeth Subrin, and Seth Price, and those who were born in 1996 and were first eligible to vote in a presidential election in 2016, including Astrid Terrazas and Meetka Otto. Essays by writers such as Mychal Denzel Smith and Natasha Stagg, and archival images from zines, magazines, and newspapers (a Sassy profile of 15-year-old model Ivanka Trump is particularly remarkable), provide further background. *1996* is a yearbook, a time capsule, a queer history, and a treasure trove. Megan Milks spoke with Keegan over video chat days before the wrap of 2020, another astonishing year.

MEGAN MILKS: So often, histories are organized according to decades, periods, waves, or presidencies. Why did you choose 1996?
MATT KEEGAN: In the leadup to the presidential election of 2016, Hillary Clinton's platform, especially in comparison to Bernie Sanders's campaign, was akin to that of a centrist Republican, and I wanted to better understand when the Democratic Party began to move to the right. That research led me to read about the formation of the Democratic Leadership Council and the election of Bill Clinton. I chose 1996, the year of Clinton's reelection, over 1992 because the more research I did, the more significant 1996 became. In the ongoing AIDS crisis, 1996 is considered a watershed moment when people with access to healthcare could receive protease inhibitors that



Matt Keegan, *1996*
p. 12–13. Time magazine covers from 1996
Inventory Press, Los Angeles, 2020
Image courtesy of the artist and Inventory Press

made an HIV+ diagnosis no longer a death sentence. It's the year when the general public understood the internet, even though in oversimplified and naive terms, since Microsoft launched Internet Explorer in 1995. Fox News started in 1996. Benjamin Netanyahu was first elected as Prime Minister of Israel. Legislation-wise, the Welfare Reform Act, the Telecommunications Act, and the Immigration Reform Act—all of which have great relevance to the current sociopolitical moment—were all signed that year.

MM: This remarkably dense and generous book brings together archival material, oral histories, researched essays, and a play excerpt. Obviously, you had to be shrewd in your selections.

MK: It was a slow build. In 2008, for my book *AMERICAMERICA*, I interviewed artists



Matt Keegan, 1996, Inventory Press, Los Angeles, 2020 | Image courtesy of the artist and Inventory Press

who graduated from the School of Visual Arts in 1986. For 1996, I knew from the outset that I wanted to look outside of New York. Los Angeles became a central location, as half of the artists attended the University of California Los Angeles at that time. I then worked with Svetlana Kitto to create the choral form that stitches the separate conversations together into one central discussion, which we titled “An Aroma of ’90s Gay Smells.” From there, I started building the broader puzzle and finding contributors to address what I deemed to be the core topics. I worked to create a balance between commissioned essays by journalists and writers, first-person narratives, and interviews to give a reader a diverse and immersive portrait of the time. The point was never to be exhaustive.

MM: The archival images peppered through the book—are these from your personal collection?

MK: Over the last three years, I started purchasing magazines from 1996 off eBay—*Time*, *Rolling Stone*, *Sassy*, *Us Weekly*—and looking for ads and stories that had a resonance with 2020. I also started saving clippings from the *New York Times* that had a relationship with the midnineties. There are so many gems that didn’t make the cut.

MM: Do you have any favorites?

MK: There are so many that are just bonkers. The things that we were sold about the environment—like plastic. The plastic ad is kind of sinister, promoting plastics as “the sixth basic food group.” Or the illustration of sweet animals congregating for a Chevron advertisement, viewed with the knowledge that Big Oil knew about global warming as early as the 1970s but didn’t do anything. There are certain things that age to an ouch, and other things that have aged to a laugh. The Kenneth Cole ad, which reads, “The year is 2020. Computers can cook, all sex is safe and it’s illegal to bear arms and bare feet...” was obviously perfectly timed for my use. I found the ads about the internet to be so naive—like the internet as being a quirky, niche thing rather than the ubiquity that we negotiate every single day of our lives. The idea that the internet could be tailored to you as an alternative, funky person is so quaint and funny.

MM: One thing I noticed you left out, in terms of key 1996 moments, was the release of Tori Amos’s *Boys for Pele*.

MK: [Laughs.] I also could have gone into a Mariah Carey spiral. Music is definitely discussed in detail throughout the choral conversation and the interview between Alissa Bennett and Mel Ottenberg, but it’s a topic I could have given more focused attention to. I was listening to so much music at that time.

MM: Who were you in 1996?

MK: I was a sophomore in college. That’s also the year that I came out. Bill Clinton was the first president that I voted for when I was of voting age, in 1996. I thought about my own relationship to that year in regard to voting for Clinton and understanding, even at that time, that I was the target for his candidacy. His playing the saxophone on *The Arsenio Hall Show*—he was being imaged as a “cool” candidate. I understood that as being differentiated for me as a young consumer and voter versus... the absolute opposite of cool, which would be Bob Dole, his Republican opponent. Or the Independent candidate, Ross Perot, for that matter.

MM: With this book, you’re interested in how artists participate in a broader cultural history. You don’t seem as interested in historicizing the art world as an institution. What was your relationship to art at that time?

MK: Around 1996, I was introduced to Group Material and Fred Wilson’s exhibition *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, and I was deeply impacted by the possibilities of collaboration and collective work and institutional critique. Sophomore year was the first time I collaborated with a classmate. I did a project with my friend Denise Delgado where we got a grant from our school, Carnegie Mellon, to make an exhibition called *The Whole Art Show*. We put out a call to people within the city of Pittsburgh via ads on buses and in local newspapers, asking for residents to reach out to us if they considered themselves to be artists. We connected with visual artists, as well as people doing hair, working in textiles, bakers, and musicians. That was an



important project for me. It ignited my interest in collaboration, but also this idea of storytelling, too—through public exchange. As a side note, Fred Wilson lectured at Carnegie Mellon the day before *The Whole Art Show* opened, and Denise and I nervously invited him to the opening and gave him my landline number to contact us. When we came back to my apartment, Fred had left a message and, although he was unable to attend the opening, we screamed as if a rock star had left a message on my answering machine. Total nerds!

MM: You mention the problem of intergenerational loss, and you present this book as a kind of gift or time capsule for younger generations. I'm curious about your own relationship to intergenerational loss as a queer artist.

MK: Intergenerational loss is a hard thing to articulate. My whole sexual life was defined by AIDS. I never understood sex without illness and death being interwoven. And a lot of queer people around my age understand the tremendous loss of the generation before ours. What immediately comes to mind is a kind of absence that is ill-defined, a mourning of specific people but also a mourning of a past that I only understand through oral history.

I recount in my introduction being shocked that smart and savvy students that I taught in recent years did not know about ACT UP. I was quite upset, and I said to my students, "I want you to understand that this kind of cultural erasure is a conservative project, that this isn't a fluke that you don't know this information. This is part of learning—paying attention to what is historicized and what is not. And deciding what role we want to play in countering that erasure."

Matt Keegan, 1996
p. 17. Kenneth Cole advertisement from *Details*, March 1996
Inventory Press, Los Angeles, 2020
Image courtesy of the artist and Inventory Press

Matt Keegan, 1996
p. 236–37. Twenty-three people born in 1996
Inventory Press, Los Angeles, 2020
Image courtesy of the artist and Inventory Press



Installation view *USE YOUR WORDS* at Altman Siegel, San Francisco, CA, 2019



Installation view *USE YOUR WORDS* at Altman Siegel, San Francisco, CA, 2019



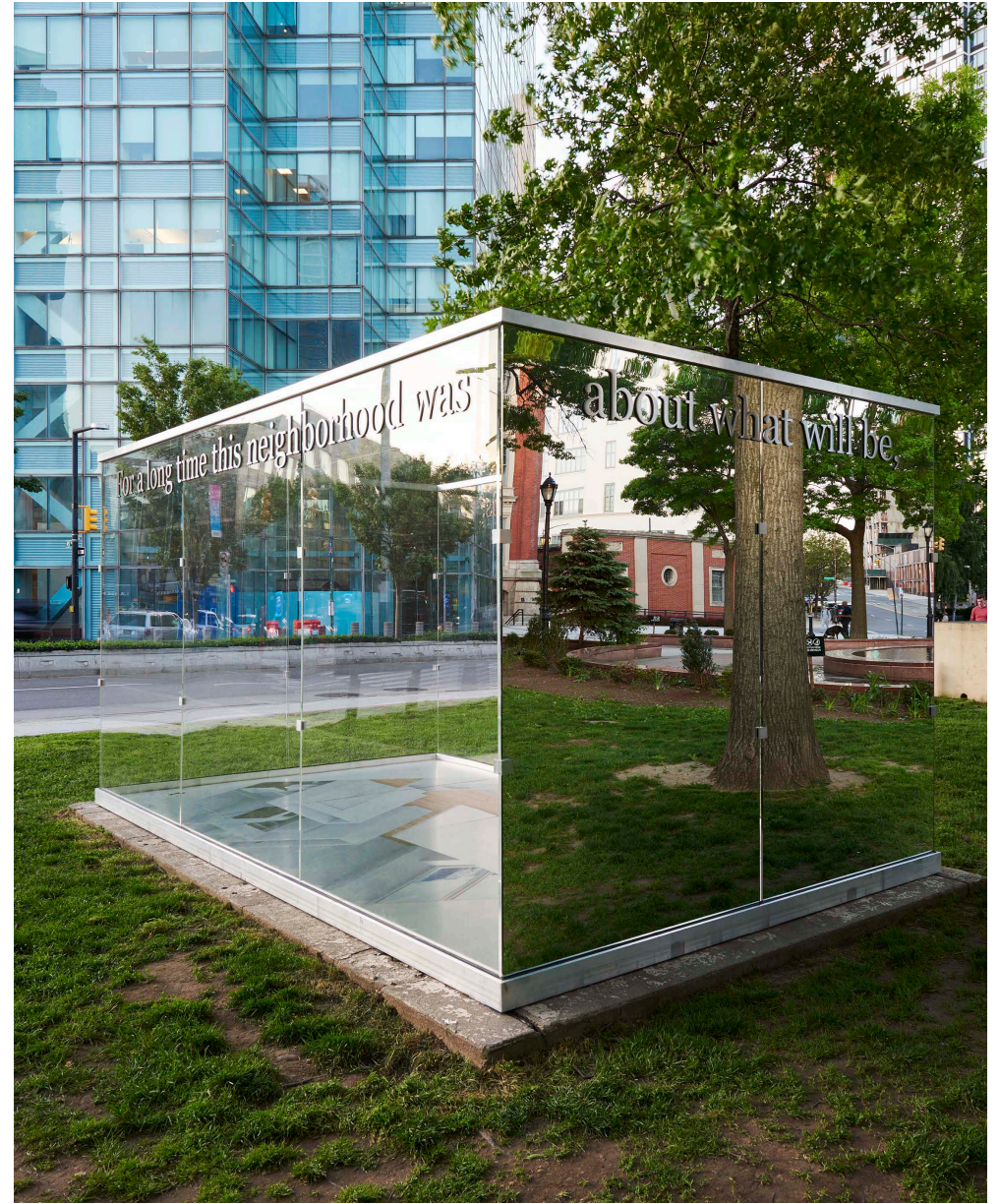
For a long time this neighborhood was

what was & what is, 2019

plexiglas, mirrored glass, aluminum, stainless steel, vinyl, UV print on Dibond

43.8 x 278.1 x 489 cm

Installation view at Sculpture Center, New York, 2019



Installation view *what was & what is* at Sculpture Center, New York, 2019



Installation view *what was & what is* at Sculpture Center, New York, 2019



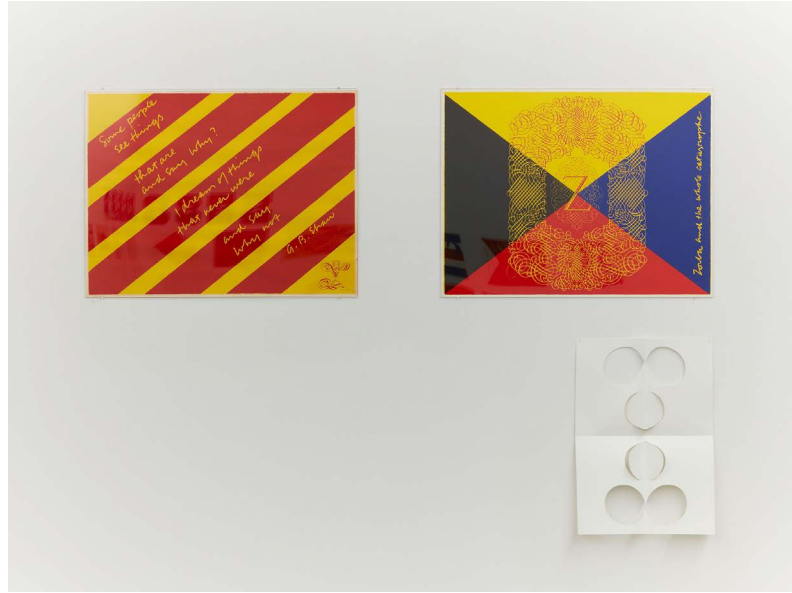
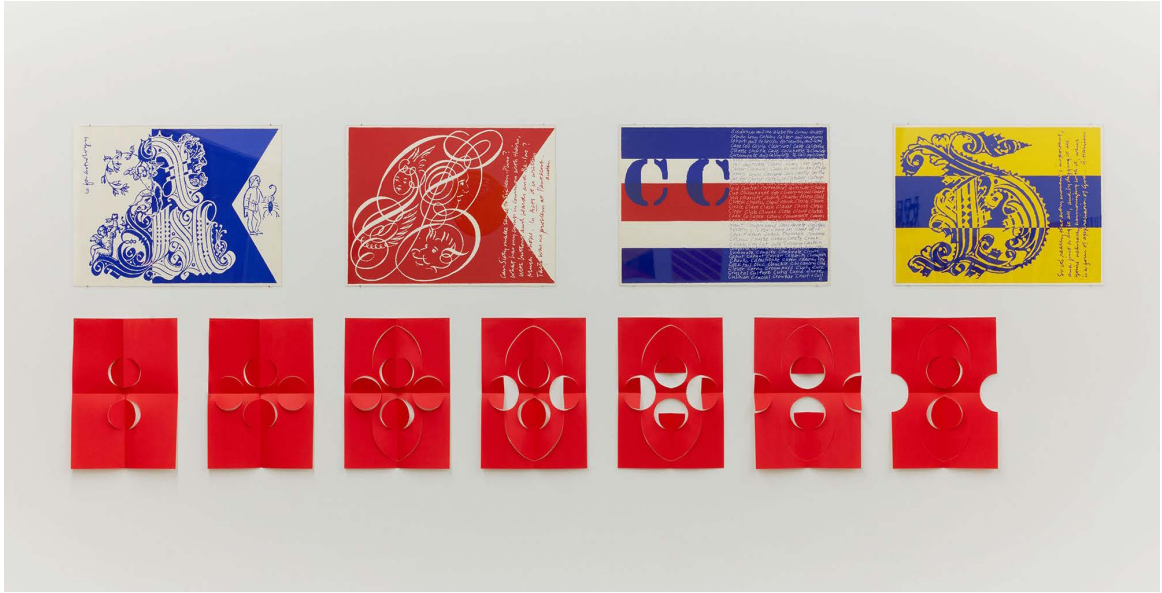
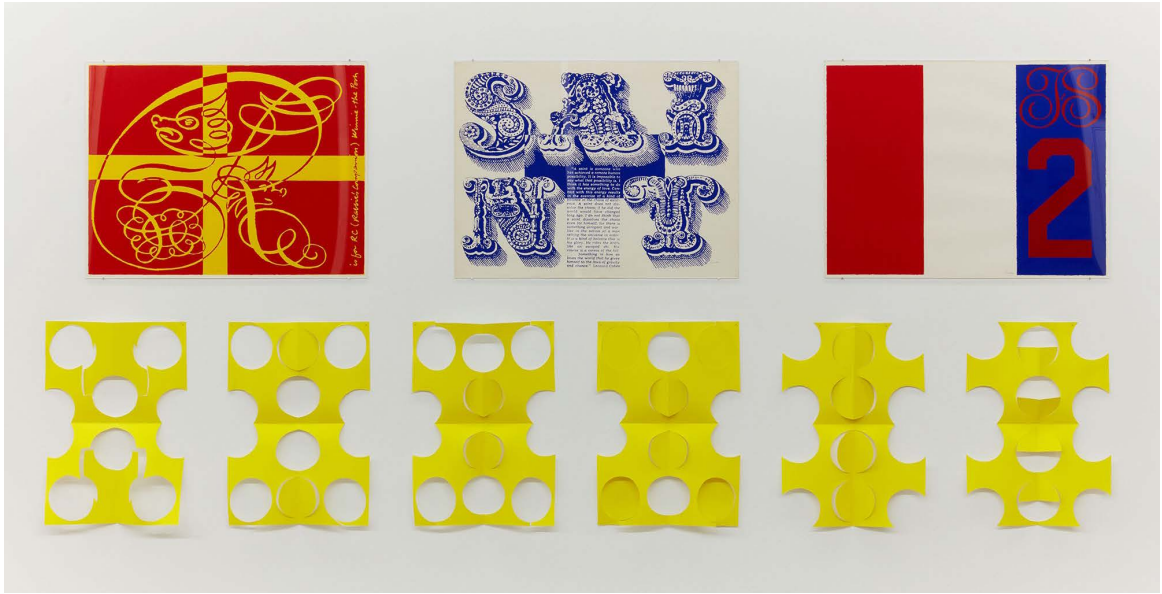
Installation view *what was & what is* at Sculpture Center, New York, 2019



Exhibition view *I Wish to Communicate With You: Corita Kent and Matt Keegan* at Potts, Los Angeles, USA, 2019



Exhibition view *I Wish to Communicate With You: Corita Kent and Matt Keegan* at Potts, Los Angeles, USA, 2019



Exhibition view *I Wish to Communicate With You: Corita Kent and Matt Keegan* at Potts, Los Angeles, USA, 2019

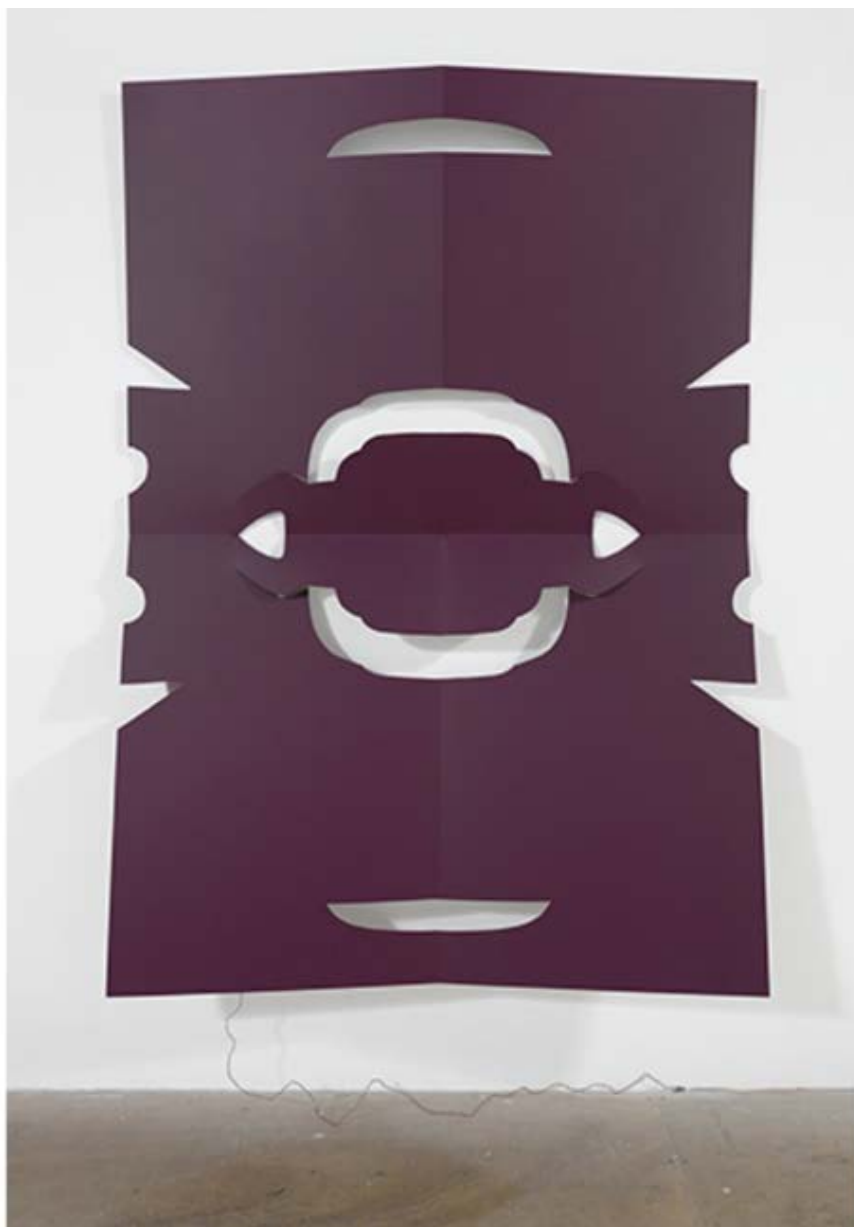


Word Prompts: Matt Keegan's Replicate
BOMB, December 15, 2017
Claire Barliant

What do you think of when you hear the word “cloud”? White puffs of air? Cotton candy? These are two responses—the first from a young boy, the latter from a much older man—in Matt Keegan’s engrossing two-channel video installation, *Generation*, 2016. The main draw at his first institutional U.S. solo exhibition, deftly curated by assistant director Daisy Nam at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts in Cambridge, MA, the installation is made up of two screens that face each other, with one of them displaying a video in which the artist interviews members of his family. Each subject is shot starkly from the waist up against a monochrome background, and Keegan’s interviews consist of him asking the person to define a word and then visualize it in terms of shape, color, weight, and movement. The images, including a “rolling pin” for “mother” and an “arrow” for “home,” are rendered as computer-generated animations that appear on the opposite screen. Between these specific images, the screen animation consists of a glass pitcher of water being filled and poured onto a brain, which then sprouts a neural system. This simple animation illustrates Keegan’s own thoughts—but also seems to symbolize how easily people are influenced by external media and ideas—and how these thoughts, be they toxic or tonic, spread throughout bodies, both individual and collective.

Some word prompts lead to more passionate and emotional responses, such as “immigrant” and “race.” (“I didn’t hear growing up all the racism I hear now,” says Keegan’s father. Meanwhile, Keegan’s young niece defines “race” as “competing against someone, and if you get there first, you win.”) The video, which was made before the U.S. presidential election, is shadowed but not overcome by politics. Instead it is a portrait of an American family who proves to be strongly opinionated and individualistic. Shots of Keegan’s sisters with their children at

Installation view *Replicate* at Carpenter Center
for the Visual Arts Harvard University,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2017



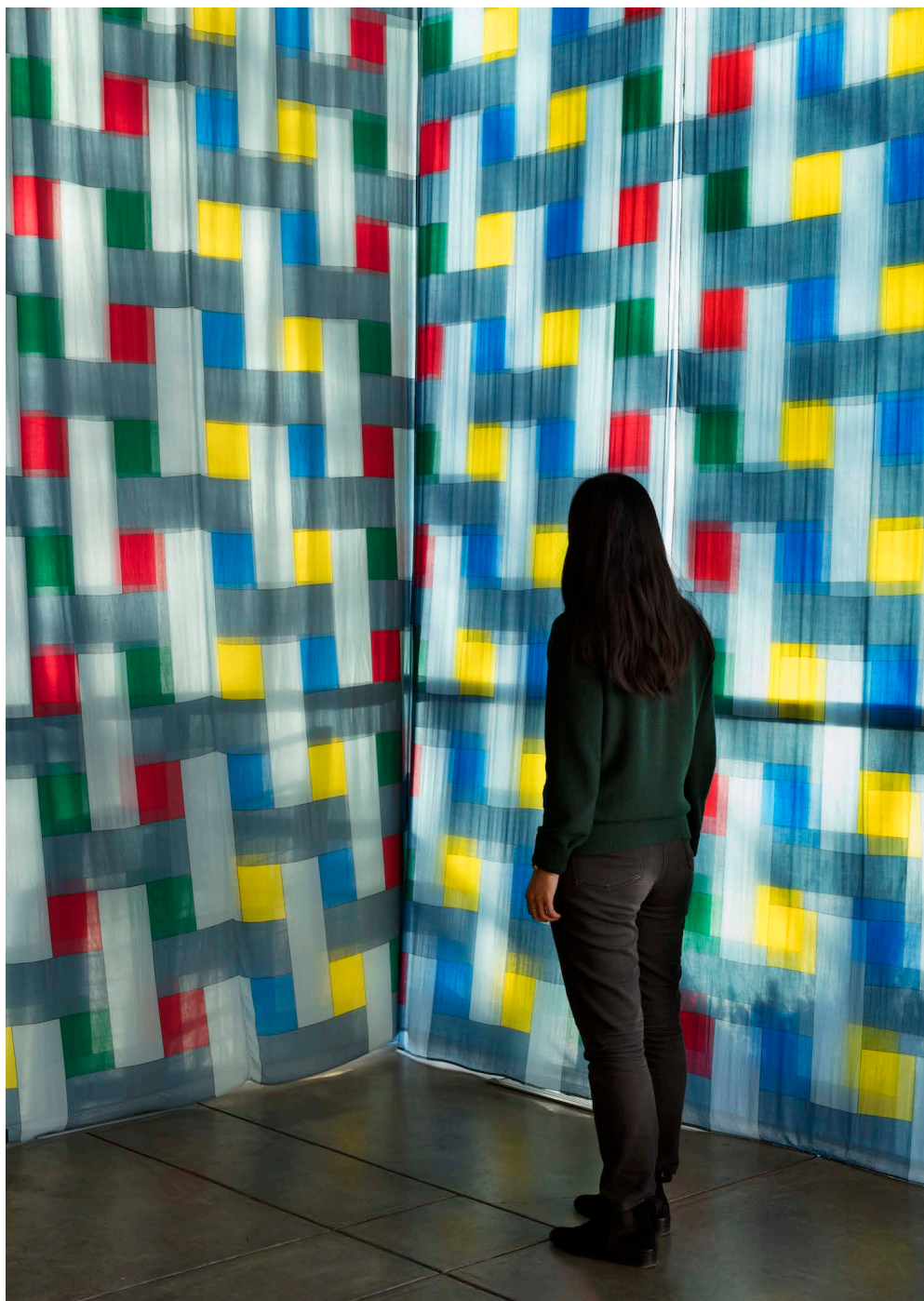
Cutouts (Echo), 2016

powder-coated steel, iPod, 2 transducers, amp with looped audio composed by Sergei Tcherepnin
147 x 203 cm



Cutouts (Echo), 2016

powder-coated steel, iPod, 2 transducers, amp with looped audio composed by Sergei Tcherepnin
147 x 203 cm

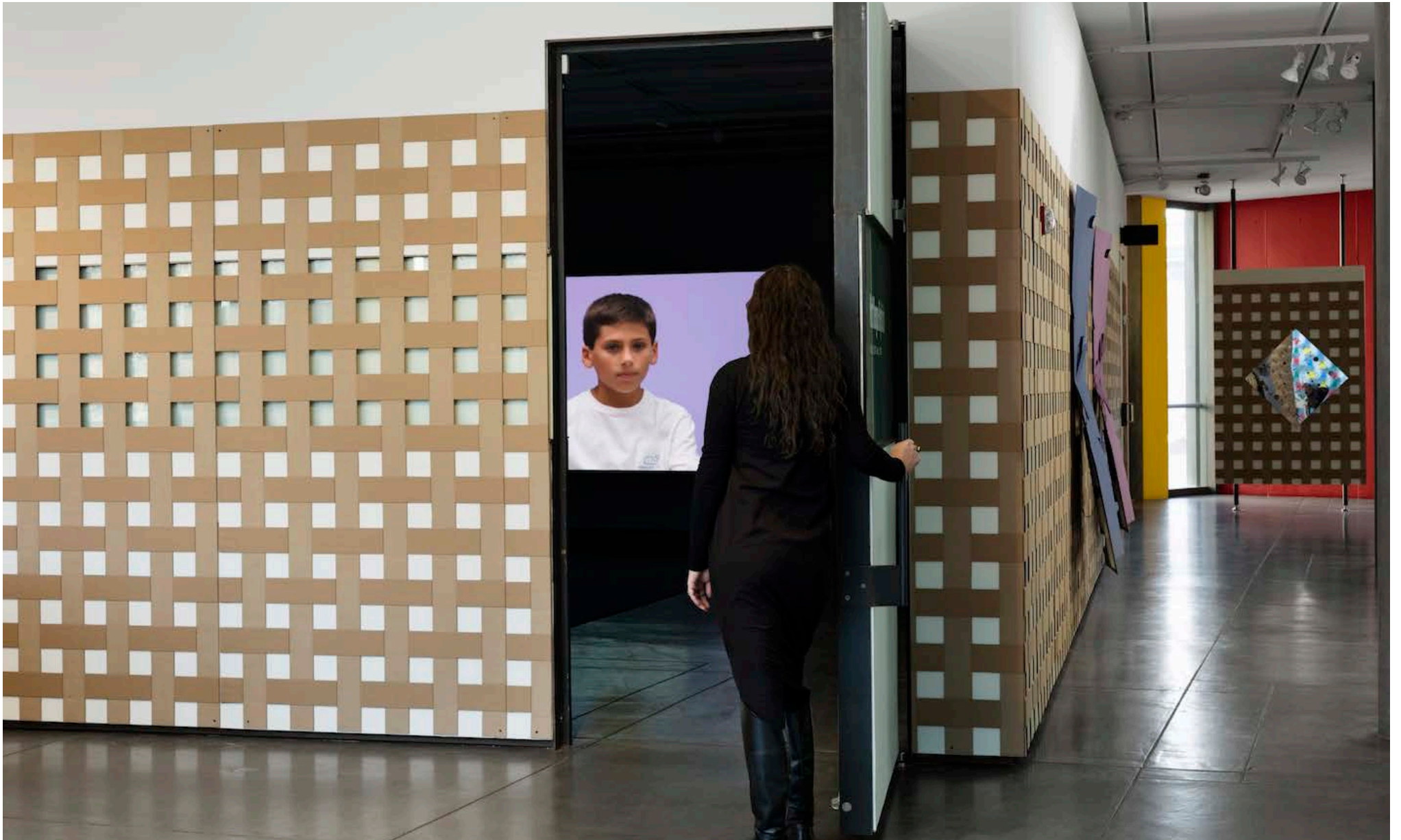


home are interspersed with the single-person interviews and move the dial back and forth from solo to ensemble, reminding us that family often surrounds and shapes children, but never entirely engulfs them.

Other components of the show include a lattice composed of cardboard strips that covers two of the walls outside the black box in which *Generation* is projected. Themes of imbrication, multiplication, and, as the title suggests, replication, repeat and compound throughout the show. Two powder-coated steel sculptures mounted on the wall, based on simple paper cutouts, emit an abstract sound piece composed by Sergei Tcherepnin and created by Keegan's pounding on the very same sculptures. What started as a childish art project is then transmuted into sophisticated sculptures, which are then employed as instruments and conveyors of the sound work made by these very same instruments. Keegan is into layering, but also transparency, so none of this comes across as unnecessarily fussy or pretentious, but rather considered and intriguing.

Near the entrance, a luminous curtain riffs on the bold primary colors selected by Le Corbusier to highlight the Carpenter Center building's aerators—small channels that run up and down the sides of the walls, meant to circulate air. This is easily one of the most beautiful exhibitions to appear at the Carpenter Center over the past two years, showing the quirky building to great advantage. Although the elements at play in Keegan's show are relatively simple, evoking early childhood education fundamentals like language, shape, and color, together they conjure an atmosphere both elegant and thought-provoking.

Installation view *Replicate* at Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2017



Installation view *Replicate* at Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2017



Staging, 2016

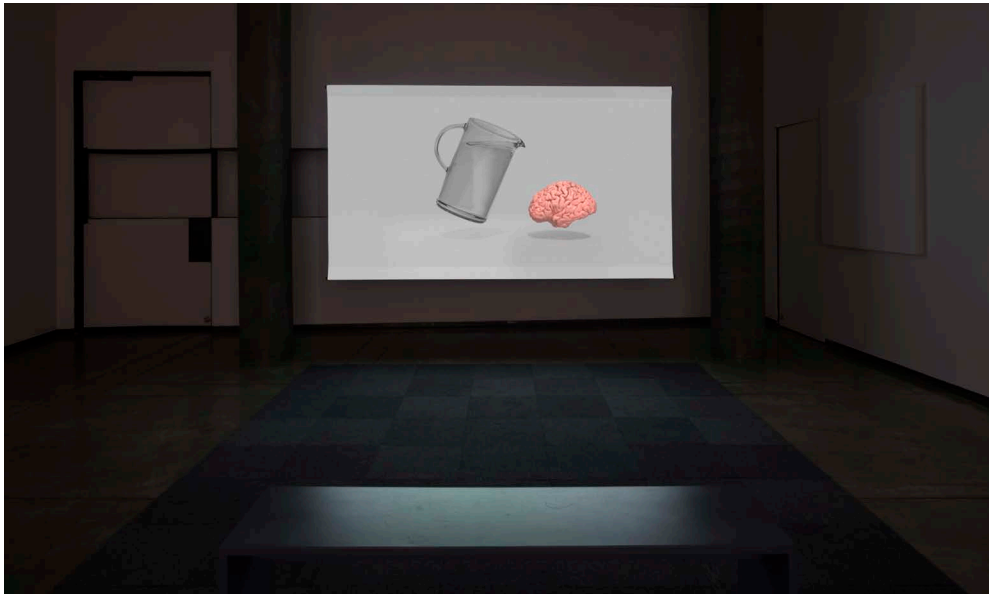
ink-jet printed Sheetrock

732 × 243 cm

Installation view *Generation* at Participant Inc., New York, 2016



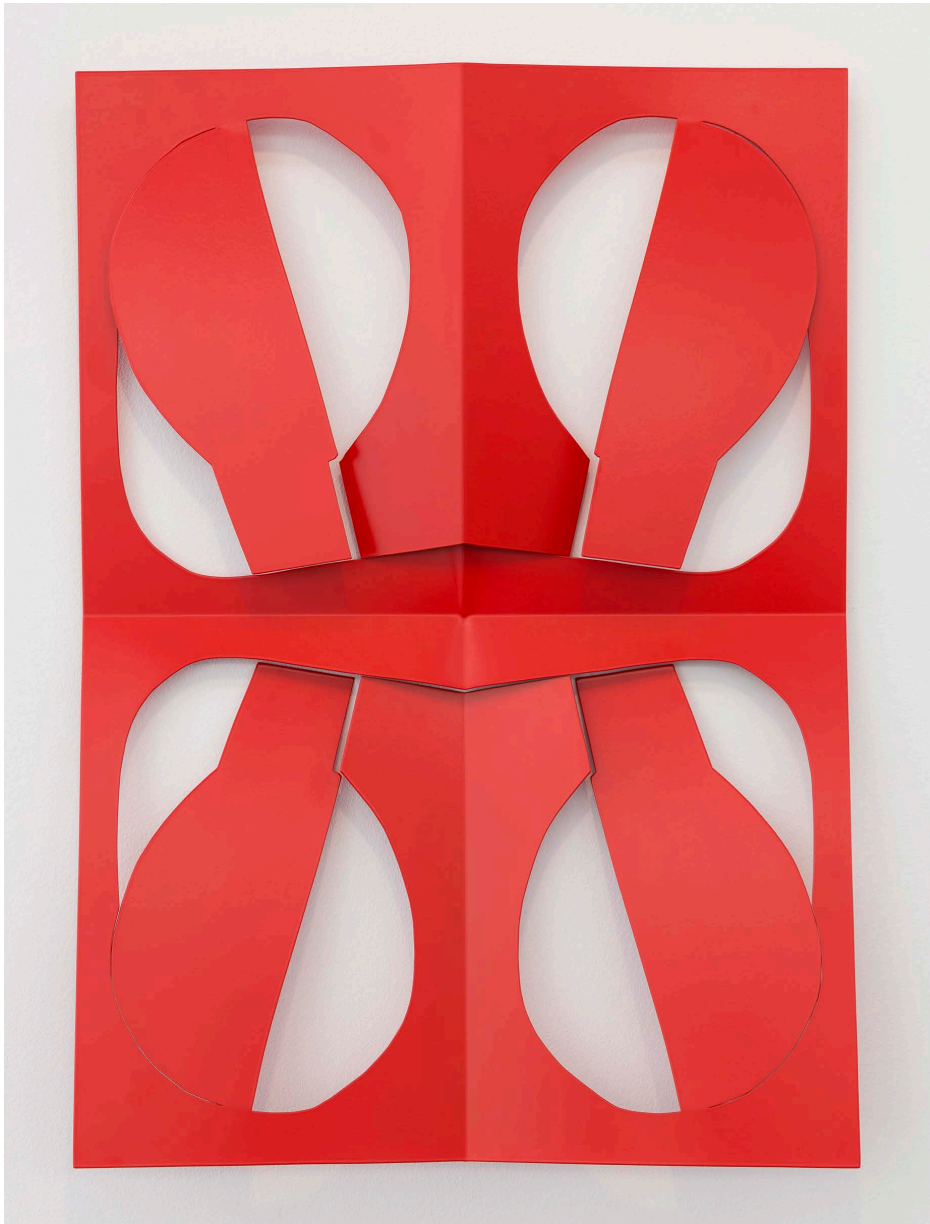
Installation view *Generation* at Participant Inc., New York, 2016



Channel 2 of Generation, 2016
two-channel video, color, sound
44' 30"



Exhibition view *LL/EE* at Galeria Pedro Cera, 2016

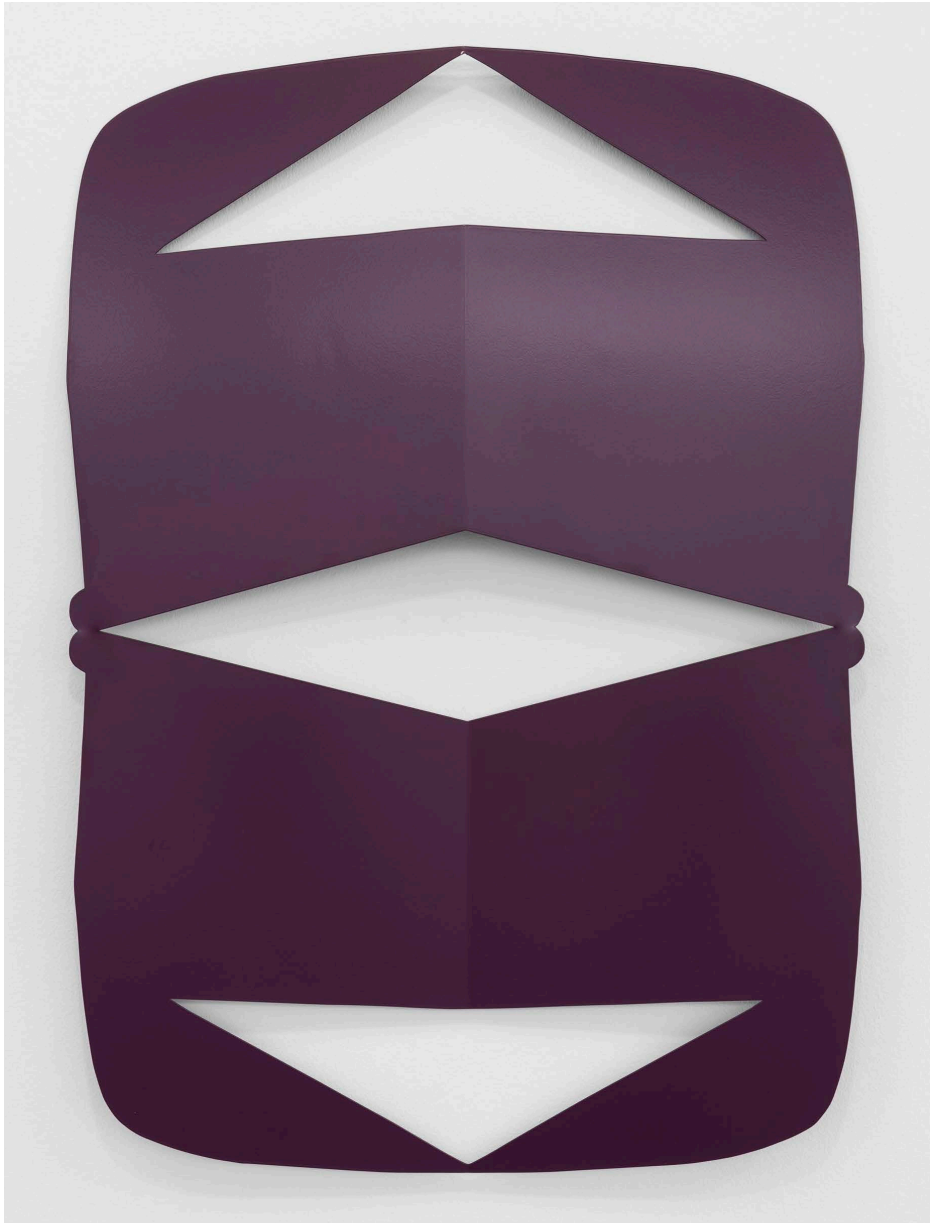


Lisbon Cutout (Traffic Red), 2016
powder coated steel, laser cutout
83,9 × 59,2 cm

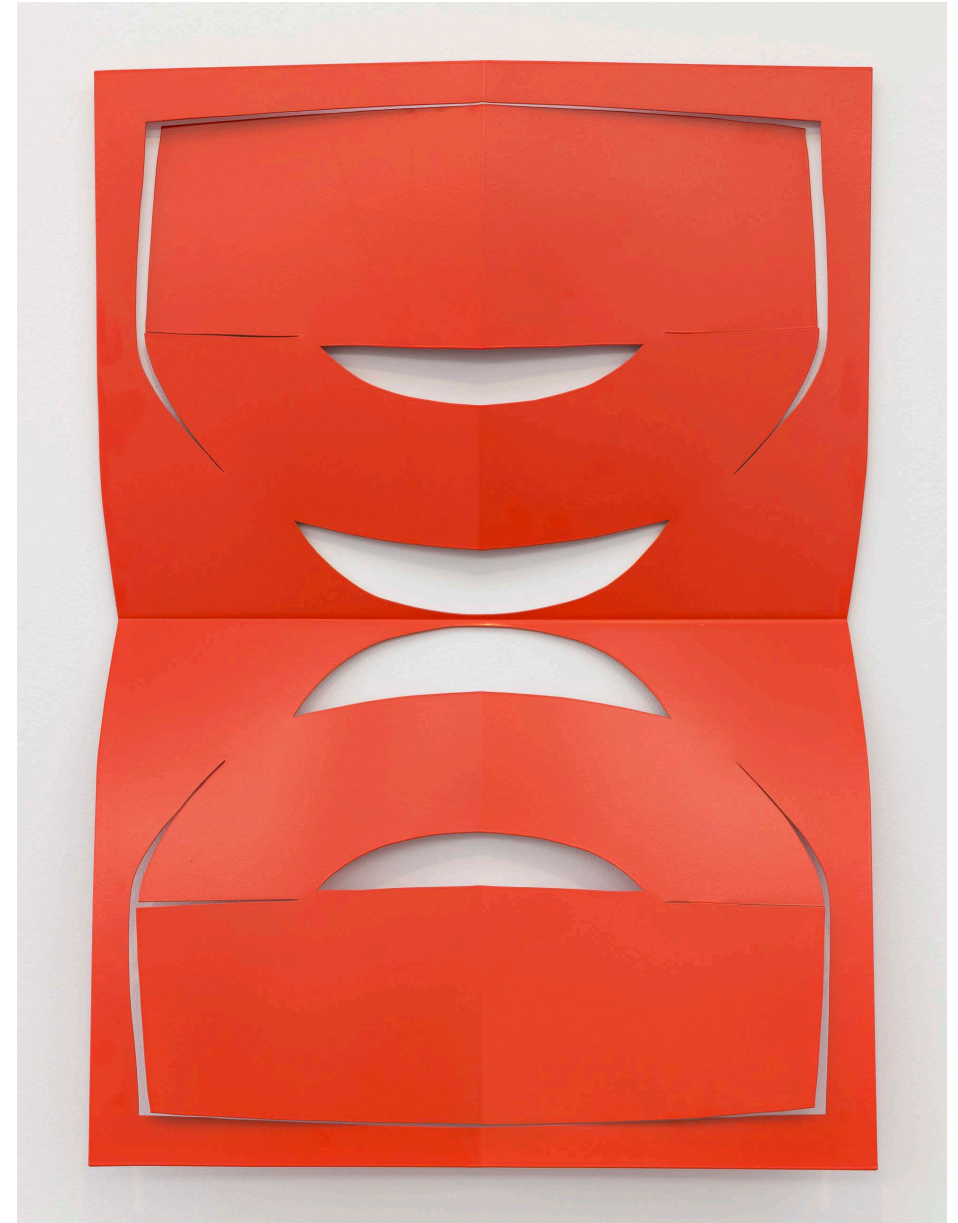


Lisbon Cutout (Traffic Yellow), 2016
powder coated steel, laser cutout
83,9 × 59,2 cm

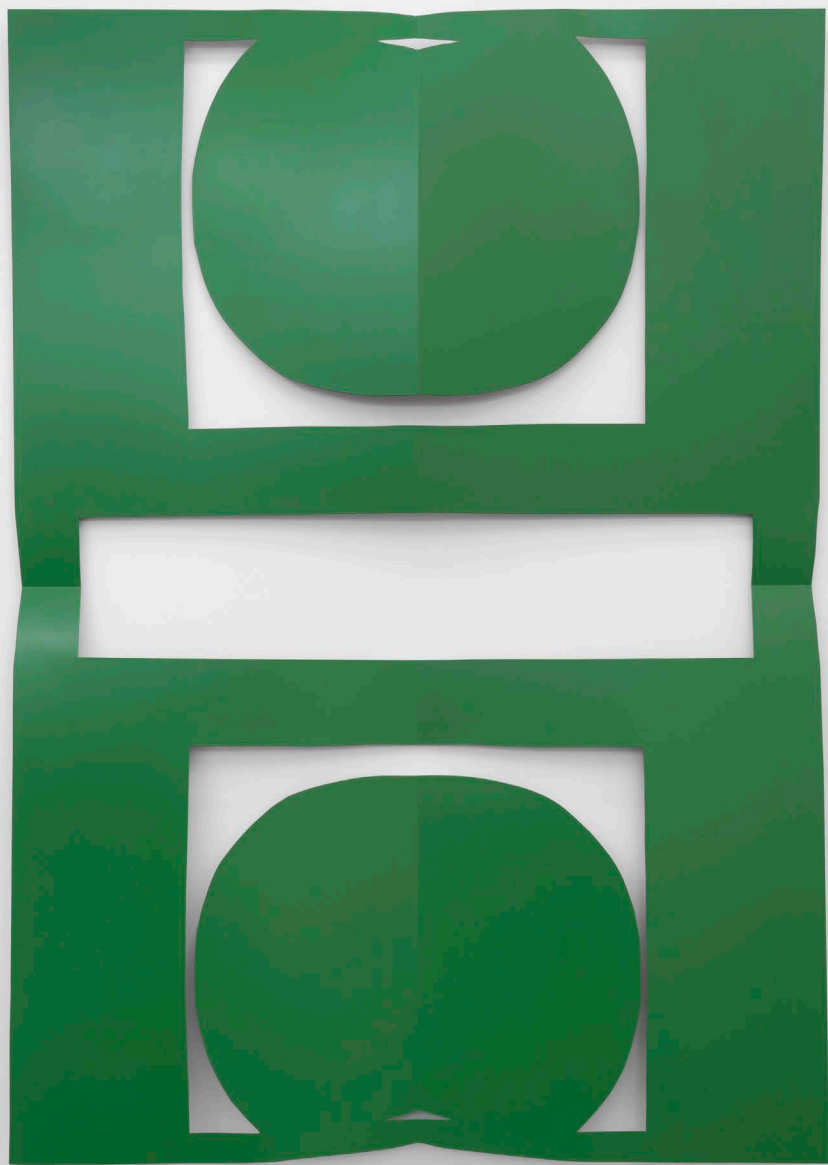




Lisbon Cutout (Purple Violet), 2016
powder coated steel, laser cutout
83,9 × 59,2 cm



Lisbon Cutout (Vermilion), 2016
powder coated steel, laser cutout
83,82 × 59,69 cm



Lisbon Cutout (Emerald Green), 2016

powder coated steel, laser cutout

209,5 × 148,5 cm



Just My Size (Self-portrait), 2016

artist's clothes, wire hanger, powder-coated screw, inkjet print, mounted oil painting
98 x 45 x 2 cm



Just My Size (Underwear), 2016

artist's clothes, wire hanger, powder-coated screw, inkjet print, mounted oil painting
98 x 45 x 2 cm

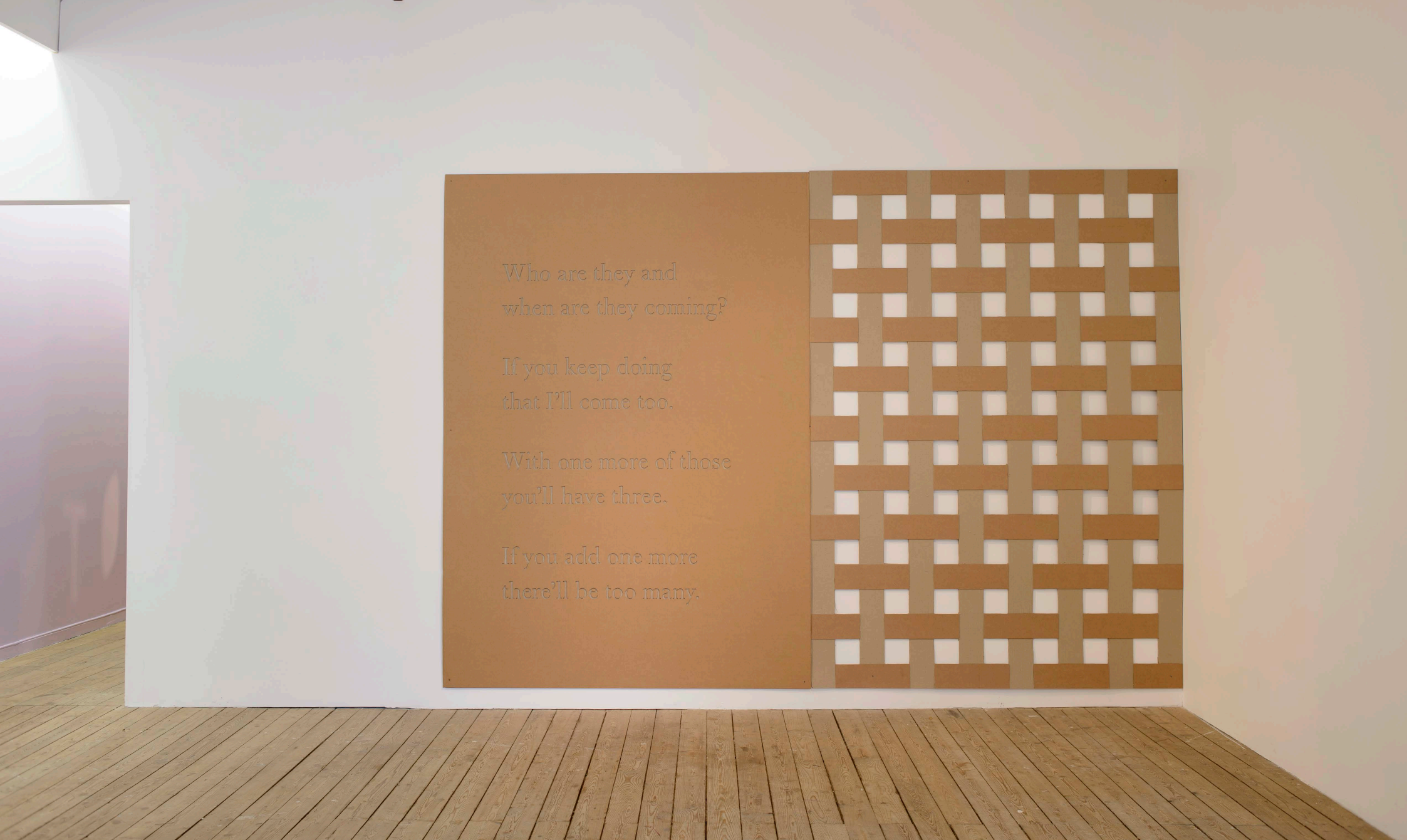


Exhibition view *Eine Wanderausstellung*, Matt Keegan & Kay Rosen, Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, Austria, 2016



More Like, 2012

latex paint on wall
Dimensions variable
Image courtesy Meyer Riegger



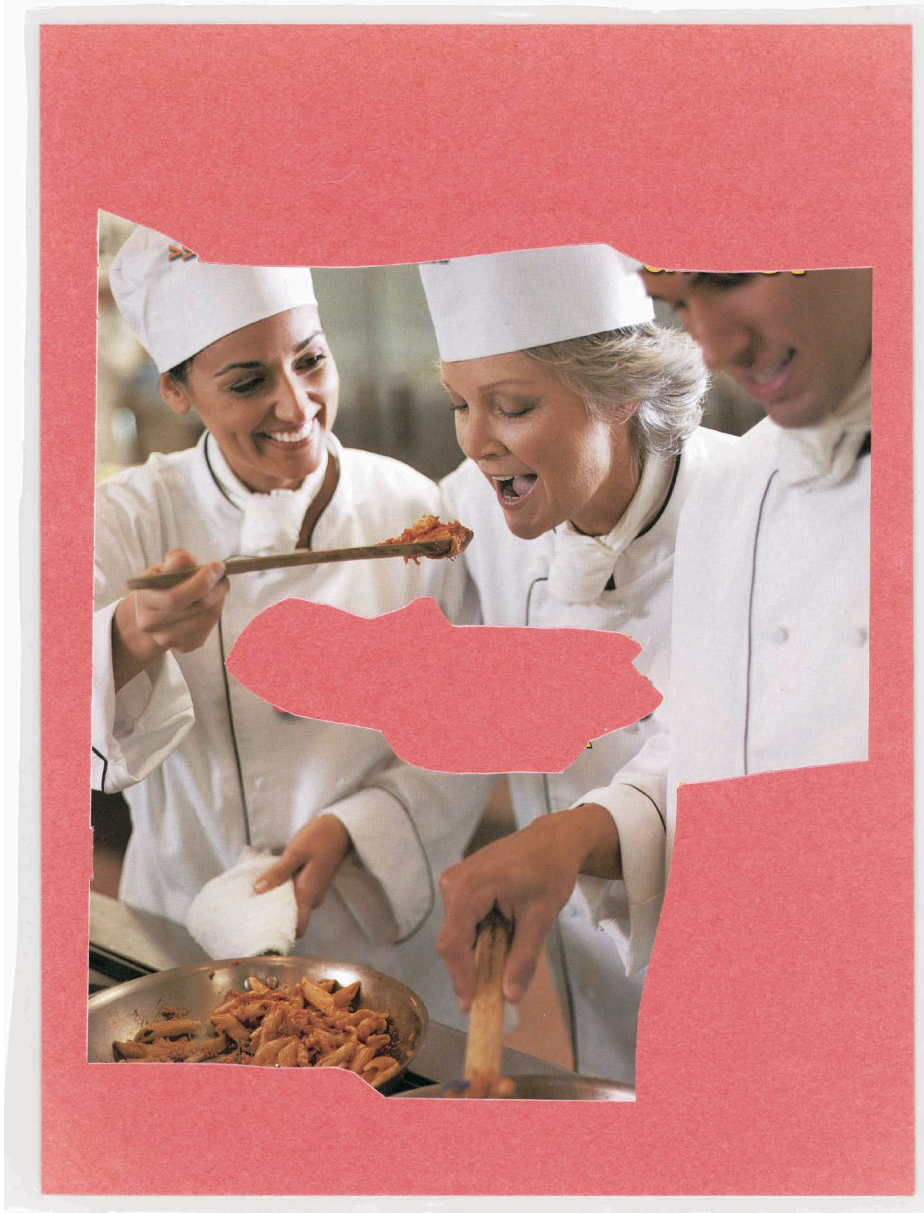
Installation view *Portable Document Format* at Rogaland Kunstsenter, Stavanger, Norway, 2015
Photo Christopher Jonassen | Image courtesy of Rogaland Kunstsenter



Installation view *Portable Document Format* at Rogaland Kunstsenter, Stavanger, Norway, 2015
Photo Christopher Jonassen | Image courtesy of Rogaland Kunstsenter



Installation view *Portable Document Format* at Rogaland Kunstsenter, Stavanger, Norway, 2015
Photo Christopher Jonassen | Image courtesy of Rogaland Kunstsenter



Images Are Words / Las Imágenes Son Palabras (Chef), 2010

C-print

126,37 × 99,38 cm

**Interview: Matt Keegan Contemporary
Art Stavanger, 2015
Marte Danielsen Jølbo**

The exhibition, titled PORTABLE DOCUMENT FORMAT, is the American artist's first solo exhibition in Norway. Below, curator and CAS editor Marte Danielsen Jølbo talks with Keegan about the exhibition, working at the kunstsenter, and his work in relationship to this new Norwegian context.

Marte Danielsen Jølbo: We can read in the invitation to the exhibition that this is a retrospective of your sculptural practice since 2006. The original sculptures were made in sheetrock (plaster board) and steel, but in this exhibition you present a remake of the sculptures in cardboard. What is behind this choice? Why this reflection and re-working of your earlier works now? (And are all the works presented re-produced or are there new works included as well?)

Matt Keegan: Portable Document Format will be accompanied by a publication that launches in the fall. This is the first opportunity that I've had to work with writers and artist friends to reflect on my work. This process of reflection was then translated to the work that I made in Stavanger.

I work with cardboard to make test versions of my sculptures. I figure out scale and design issues— spacing, font, and font size in this material, before making the work in steel. Because cardboard is already part of the work, it made sense to remake selected sculptures (from 2006-2014) in this material. Additionally, I wanted to produce this exhibition in the space of the show. Everything was either fabricated in the gallery or in the print shop in the floor below it. My work usually requires outside fabrication and I wanted this show to make use of the facilities that already exist within the Kunstsenter.

MDJ: The cardboard sculptures have been produced in Stavanger and will never leave the city as they will be destroyed and recycled after the exhibition period. How do you view the new works' relationship to the original sculptures? What lays in the destruction of them?

MK: The various people who worked on the show will get to keep a sculpture of their choosing and the rest will be recycled. I think of these cardboard versions as placeholders or surrogates for the original works. They were made with a high-level of fidelity to the originals, but have a different life and circulation. These works were made in and for Rogaland Kunstsenter and were fabricated in a material that is easy to dispose of for that reason. I don't think of this gesture as destructive in a dramatic sense, it just highlights the run of the show and mirrors the life of the exhibition.

MDJ: The material, as a surrogate, or a sketch, also has a different potential than the works you would normally display in a gallery situation. RKS director



Installation view *Portable Document Format* at Rogaland Kunstsenter, Stavanger, Norway, 2015 | Photo Christopher Jonassen | Image courtesy of Rogaland Kunstsenter

Geir Haraldseth says he's inclined to think of it as a way of internalizing the art center, which is a very different entity for showing works of art than for example your gallery Altman Siegel where you exhibited earlier this year. What are your thoughts on this? And the specifics of showing in the non-commercial context of the art center? Does it give you the opportunity to pursue some other interests/issues in your practice?

MK: I agree that this show is different from a commercial gallery show like Altman Siegel, but not because the work is made in cardboard, or because it was produced on site. The main difference is the retrospective nature of the show and the process of remaking and exhibiting pre-existing works. Exhibiting at a non-profit institution removes any concern about selling work and recouping production expenses, which is freeing. This particular exhibition also made more sense for a new audience in a country that I have yet to exhibit in. It's an introduction as well as a looking back.

MDJ: Can you tell us a bit about the background of the exhibition's title Portable Document Format?

MK: PDFs are familiar, compressed, and easily circulated file formats. The show has an efficiency that I've stated above. Since all of the exhibited works began as file formats—whether Microsoft Word, Illustrator, InDesign, or CAD, and eventually become Jpegs or Tiffs, I think of these works as existing in a space between file and artwork.

MDJ: You often use text in your work, with an emphasis both on letters' form and the patterns they make, as well as the content's meaning and references. Can you tell us how you became interested in using text and how you use it in your practice today? (How) has it changed over time? (Possibly also talk about the use of humor here).

MK: I have worked with text since early into my undergraduate studies. I'm not



Installation view *Portable Document Format* at Rogaland Kunstsenter, Stavanger, Norway, 2015
Photo Christopher Jonassen | Image courtesy of Rogaland Kunstsenter

sure why I've always been interested in this, but do know that the pedagogical emphasis on discourse (conversation and exchange) where I went to college was central to my interest in becoming an artist.

The way that I incorporate language today is not so different than how I worked with it then. I'm drawn to vernacular phrasing and words and phrases that have an open-ended (or emptied out) meaning. I'm often drawn to phrasing that has an inherent symmetry (More Like Mother/Father for example) and can be used to build a pattern, shape or otherwise.

N as in Nancy— the video that features my mother assigning words and phrases to her handmade collection of flashcards, originally used to teach English-as-a-Second-Language students, injects the most humor into the show. Translation can provide funny results. Language and meaning are both slippery. There's a fluidity (speed) to language, and when it's presented in fragments or without context, there's an awkwardness that underscores the absurdity of the clarity / consensus that language (spoken or written) purports to have.

MDJ: You also have a work in the exhibition that states the name 'Meryl Streep' repetitiously. What is the background of this work? Why her?

MK: Meryl Streep is a replica of a sculpture that I made in 2008. The original was made in sheetrock with 5-7 layers of primer + paint and then cut and peeled to the paper just before the plaster. I then went back in with gold leaf, to gild actress's name. For Rogaland, I remade this work by silkscreening her name on a sheet of cardboard. I decided to remove color from the sculptures, beyond the colors of the double-wall cardboard + black and grey.

The short version of the back story for this work, is that I had a solo show in 2008, my first in Los Angeles, that highlighted points of comparison between the

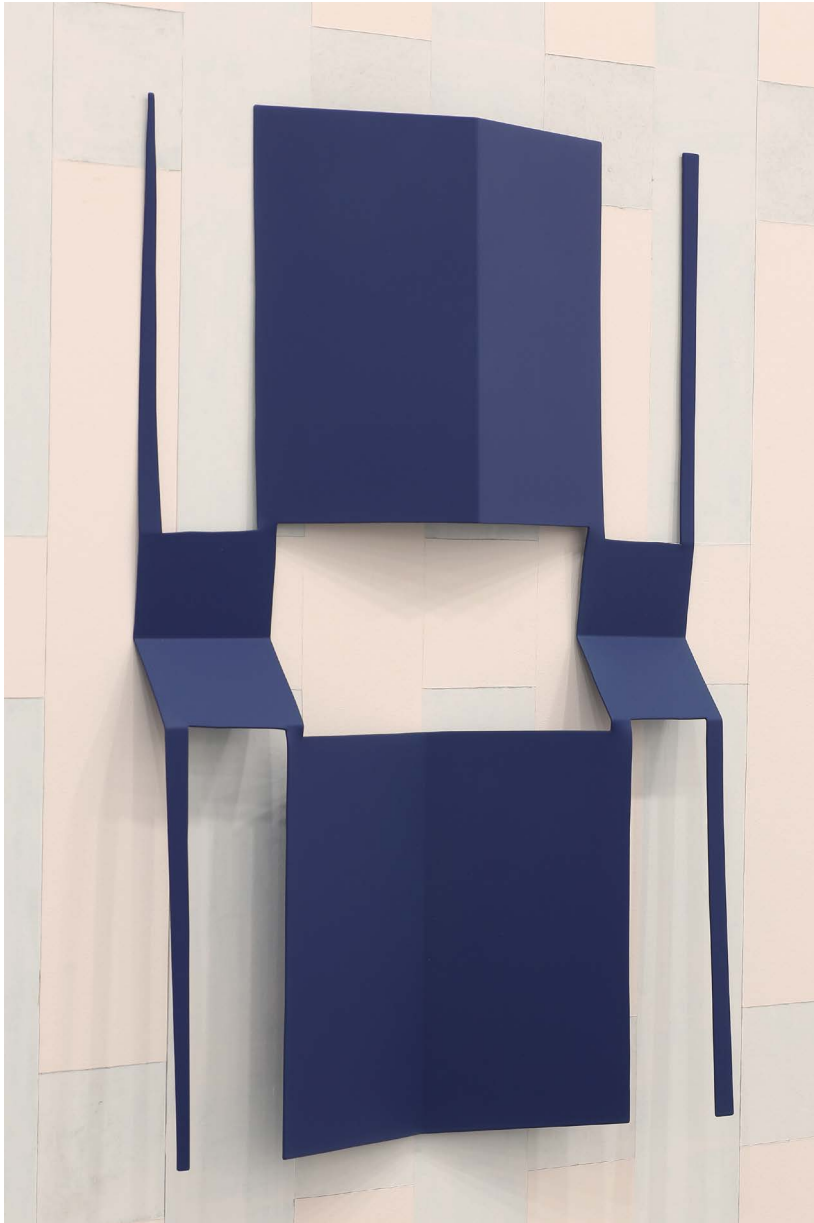
final years of the Reagan Administration (mid-to-late 1980's) and the lead up to the 2008 US presidential election, after George W. Bush's two miserable terms. I mapped political as well as social/ cultural overlaps between these time periods, using a 1986 fundraiser called "Hands Across America" as a point of departure. I also focused on the public emergence of AIDS during Reagan's presidency, and candidates, including Barack Obama, tendency to heroicize/mythologize Reagan's presidency. In researching popular music, books, and movies of the 1980's, I realized that Meryl Streep was in a movie every year, that decade. I created a portrait that highlighted her as an icon of that decade, as well as 2008.

MDJ: You mention earlier that the exhibition will be followed by a publication this fall. Can you elaborate on how you view your work with the publication in relation to the exhibition? And can you tell us more about the role of publications and publication making in your art practice in general?

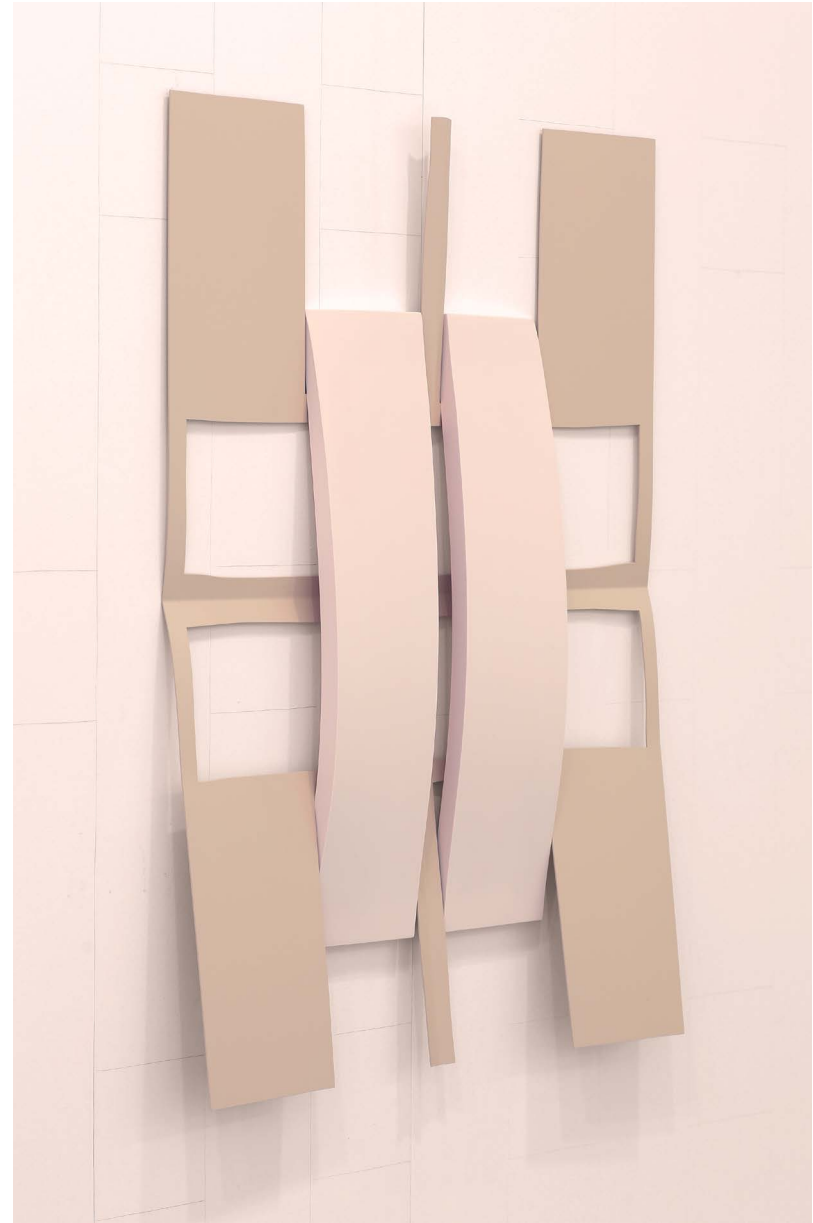
MK: The publication is a direct extension of this show and not an exhibition catalog. In some ways I consider it to be a second site of Portable Document Format, although both are self-sufficient.

I've worked as an independent publisher since 2004. Between 2004-2010, I edited and published a small-run arts edition called North Drive Press (NDP). Between 2005-2007 I was involved with curatorial projects that had significant publication companions. In 2012, I began a new edition called == (www.equalequal.info) that is an extension of NDP with a focus on featured artists, as well as more written content.

Working on all the above for over a decade directly impacted my thinking about exhibition-making and display structures. NDP was an unbound publication that came in a box, and informed my ideas of how to arrange and reconfigure the box of a given venue to best present my work and engage its audience.



Untitled (Island Blue), 2014
powder coated steel, laser cutout
83,9 × 59,7 cm



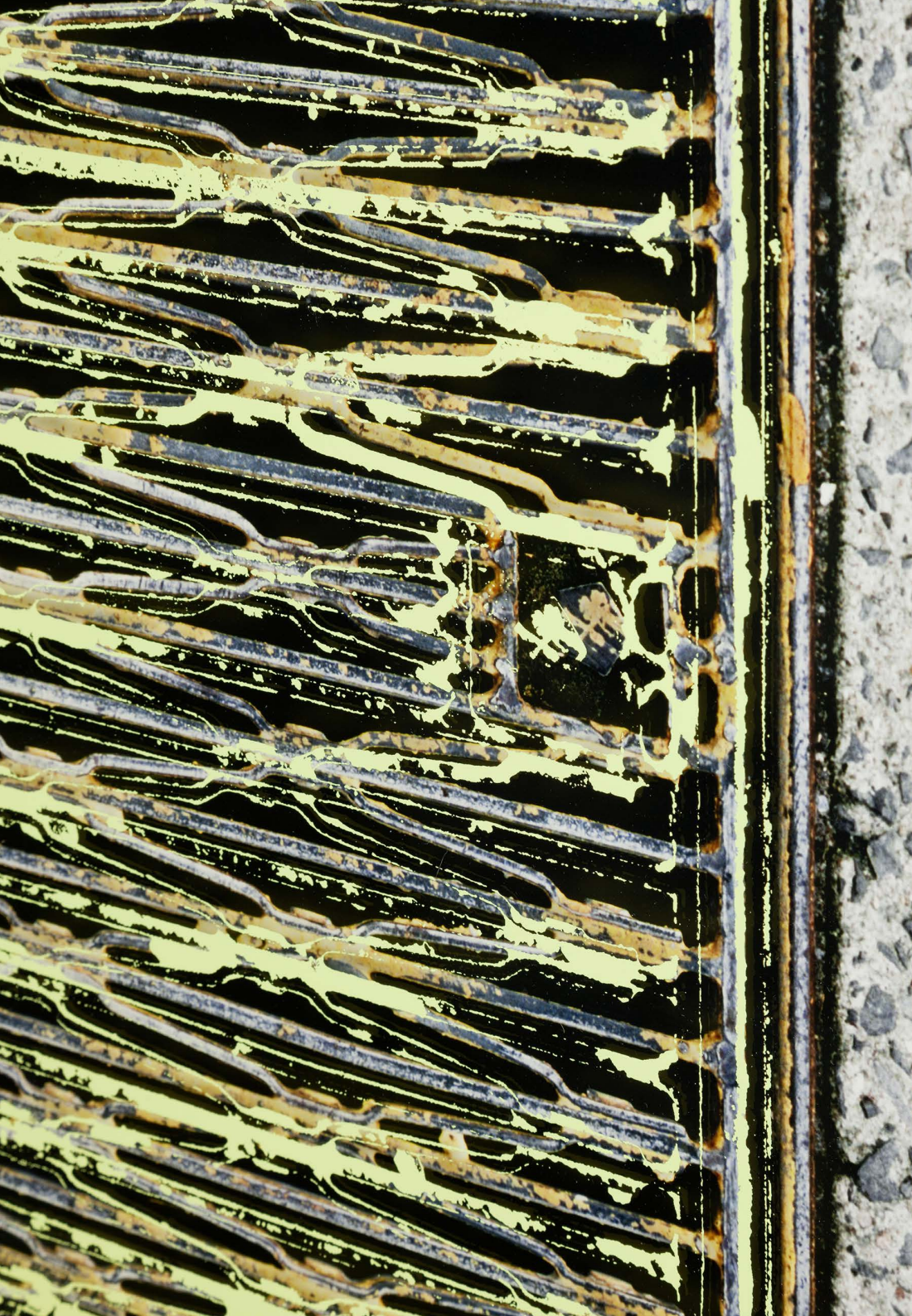
Crossed w/ Strips (Soft Pink), 2014
spray finished laser-cut steel, pigmented silicone
82.5 x 58.4 cm



Curb, 2014
c-print
116,8 × 152,4 cm



Paved Grate, 2014
c-print
116,8 × 152,4 cm



Yellow Grate, 2014

c-print with silkscreen on UV plexi

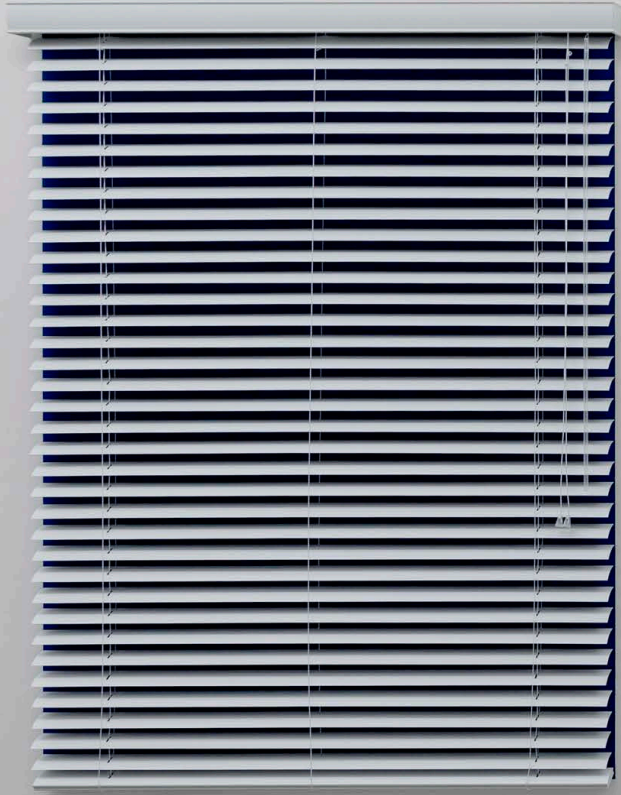
119,4 × 91,4 cm



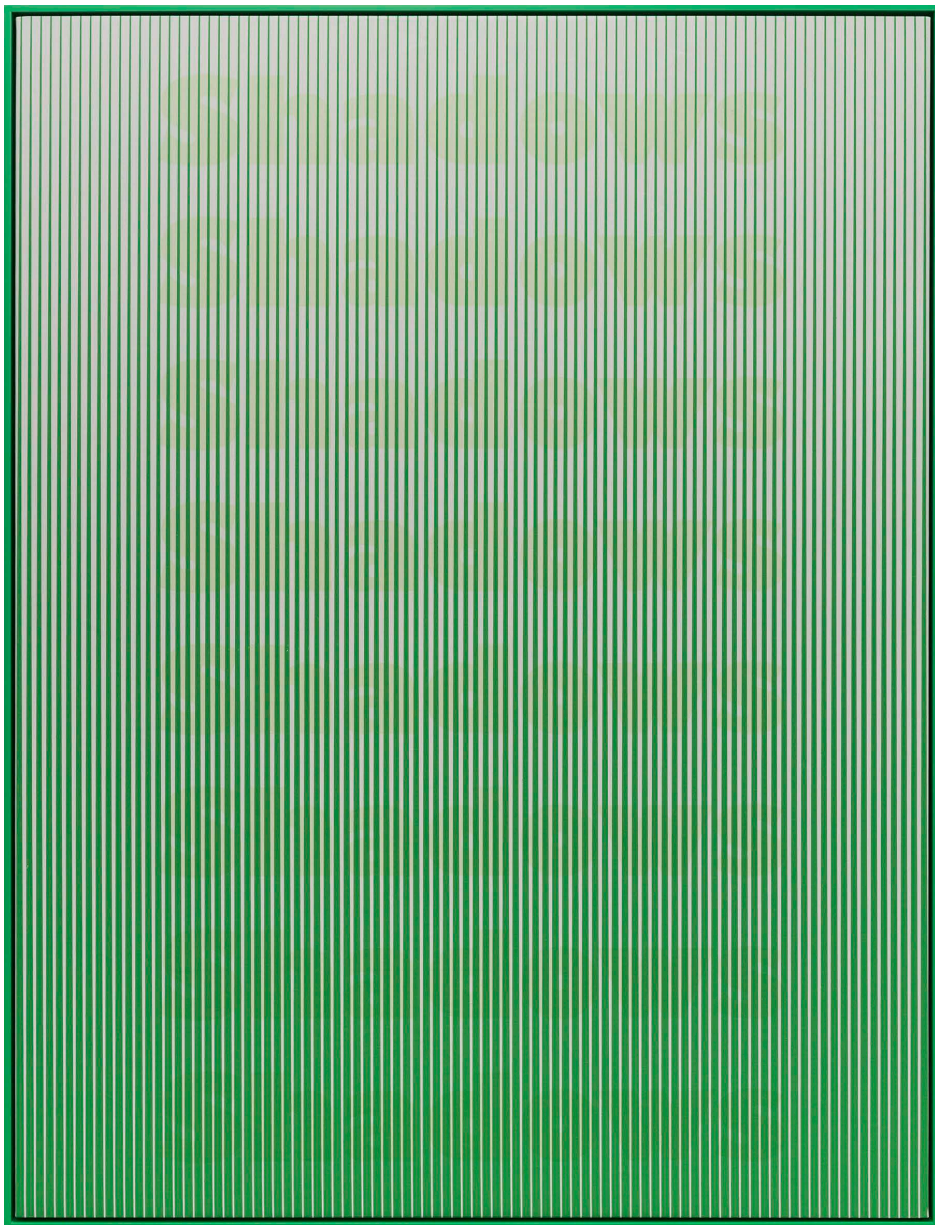
Latitude (yellow), 2013
plastic blinds and latex paint
164 × 122 cm



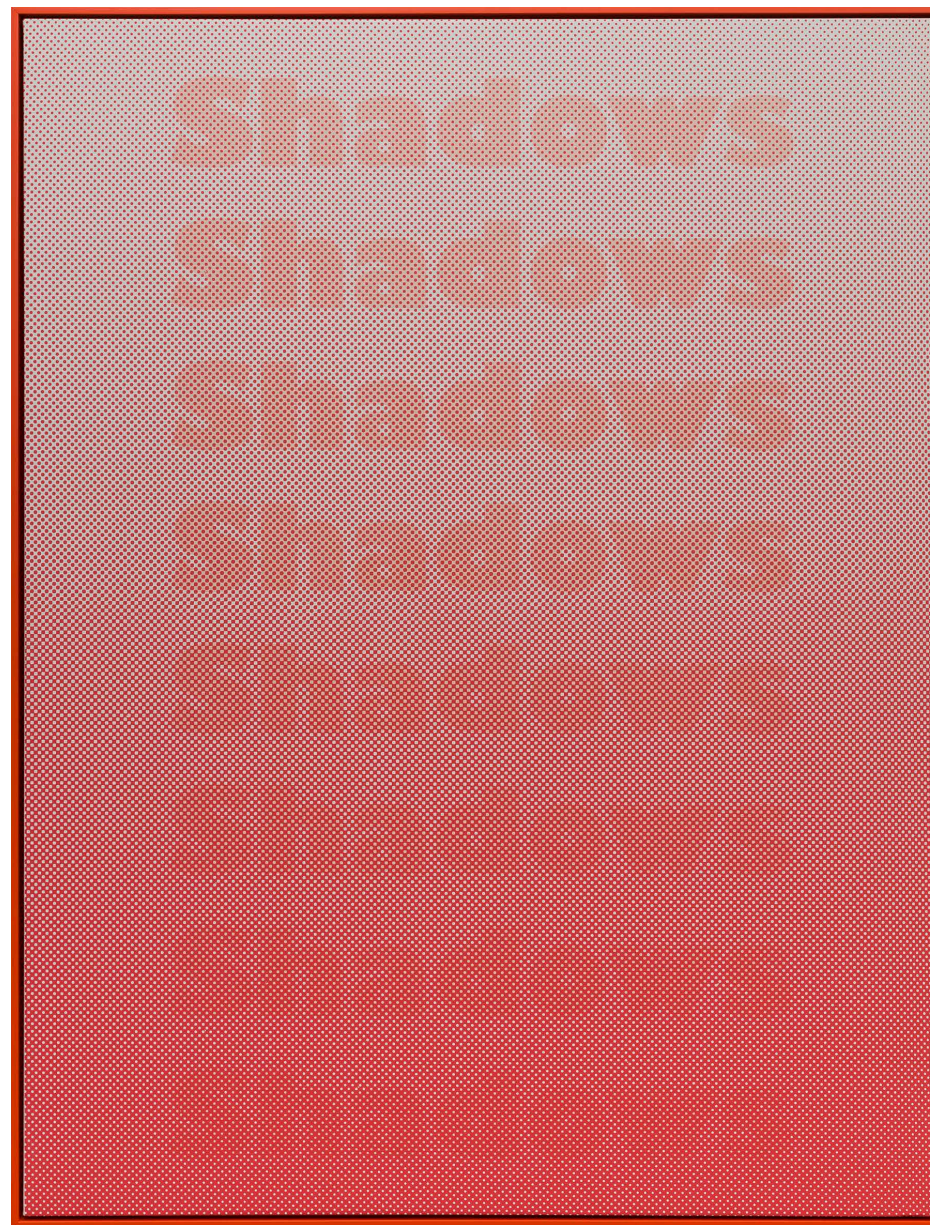
Longitude (yellow), 2013
plastic blinds and latex paint
161 × 104 cm







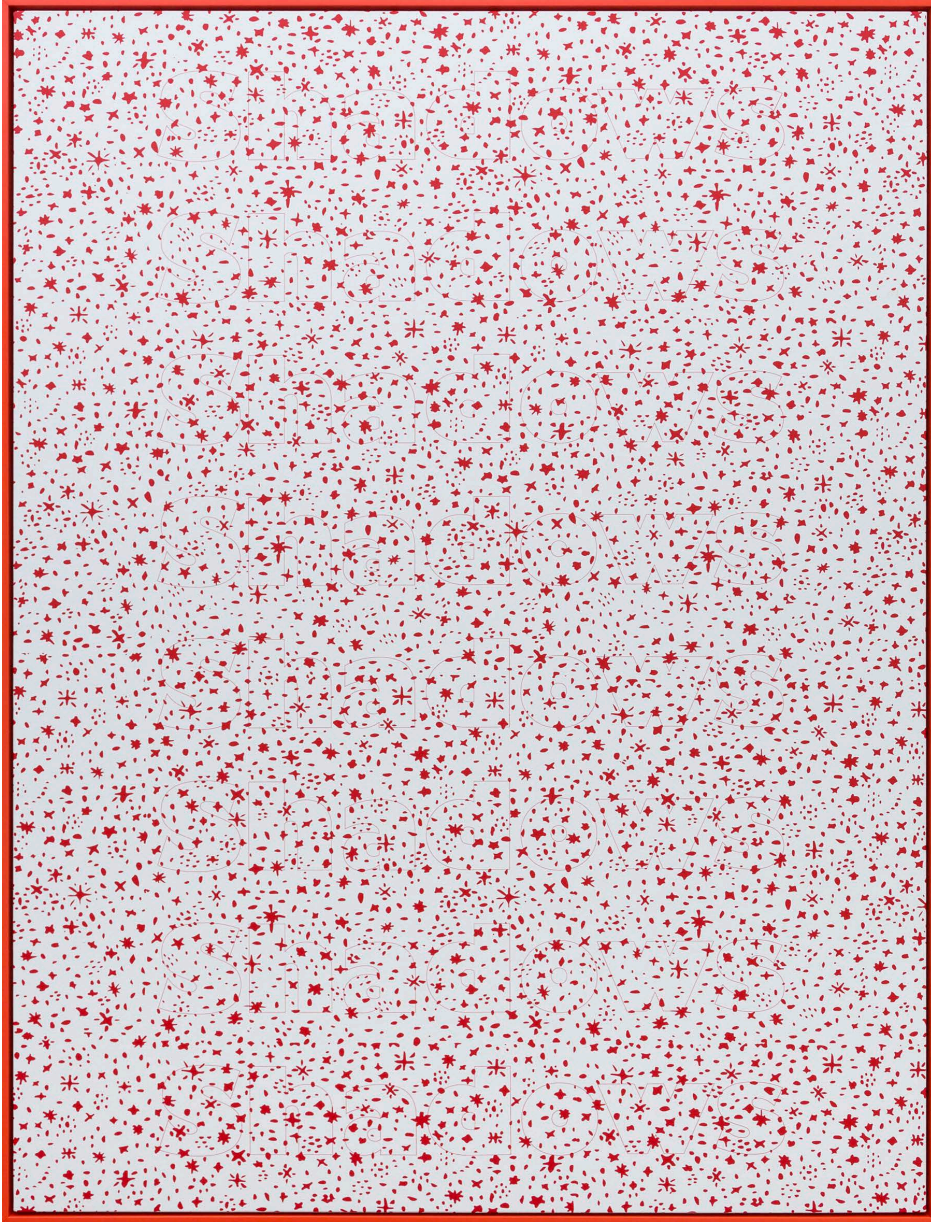
Shadows (Green 2), 2014
silkscreen on primed linen
163,5 × 125,5 cm



Shadows (Red 2), 2014
silkscreen on primed linen
163,5 × 125,5 cm



Exhibition view *Horizon* at Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon, 2013



Shadows (Red 3), 2014
silkscreen on primed linen
163,5 × 125,5 cm



Shadows (Yellow 3), 2014
silkscreen on primed linen
163,5 × 125,5 cm



Alphabet Soup (GRBs), 2013

silkscreen on linen

177 x 128 cm



More like/Mas como (solid), 2013

silkscreen on linen

165 x 130,3 cm



Installation view / *Apple NY* at D'Amelio Terras, New York, 2011

Matt Keegan. D'Amelio Terras
Artforum, September 2011
Michael Wilson

Titling his recent exhibition for Milton Glaser's iconic I♥NY logo but replacing the original's stylized heart with a stylized apple, Matt Keegan framed the show as a tribute—albeit a periodically ambivalent one—to the city. In an interview that takes the place of a press release, Keegan grills the veteran designer about, among other things, his negotiation of the myriad changes that New York has undergone in the course of Glaser's lengthy career. The designer is philosophical, admitting that times are still tough for many, but finally sides with his hometown: "It's hard for me to imagine living in any other place. I would not do that by choice." A similar blend of criticism and affection, both characteristic of the insider, epitomizes Keegan's take.

The greater part of the show was occupied by groups of small color photographs attached with magnets to a band of thin, wall-mounted metal panels. These were painted in various "industrial" colors—the checklist names "George Washington Bridge Gray," "Munsell Gray," and more—while a selection of abstract metal sculptures that occupied odd areas of wall and floor were decorated in, to take two varieties, "Pulaski Red" and "Federal Blue." Even—in fact, especially—the bridge-and-tunnel brigade should make the connection. The photographs themselves depict moments from everyday life around town. Some of the locations—streets and storefronts around Chelsea—will be familiar to gallerygoers. Other scenes are harder to place but share a focus on the odd conjunctions of permanence and ephemerality that metropolitan life produces. The style is more or less indistinguishable from that of a hundred other urban shutterbugs—I overheard one skeptic deride it

Don't worry, 2011

cut and spray-finished steel
86 × 25,4 cm





as “hipster Flickr”—but perhaps that’s the point. These images may not always be extraordinary in and of themselves, but they work perfectly as documents of an extraordinary place in that they reflect its serendipitous character.

While at a quick glance the arrangement of the photos appears random, they turn out to have been assembled—albeit casually—according to visual and thematic connections. *Untitled (Group 1)* (all works 2011), for example, includes details of a Con Ed poster, a pair of rusted manhole covers, and a hard-hat worker in repose. Other pieces group images of overstuffed bodegas, sliced-up subway ads, or close-ups of *The Panorama of the City of New York*, 1964, the periodically updated diorama installed permanently at the Queens Museum of Art. Added to this off-the-cuff frieze of Gotham observed was a limited-edition artist’s book composed of images, based on a PBS series, cataloguing key moments in the city’s physical and cultural expansion—here an engraving of Peter Minuit “purchasing” Manhattan from the Canarsie Indians for a handful of trinkets; there a Jane Jacobs obit—and a pair of curtains printed with a stack of books based on a reading list of books about cities.



Finally, in a nine-minute documentary video, *Biography/Biographer*, Keegan’s father recounts his experience of meeting various heavy-hitting colleagues of Ed Moses when he was a teenage employee of the private North Hills Golf Course. Noting their craven deference to the influential and controversial developer, Keegan Senior conveys an admiration for the scale of Moses’s accomplishment but ends up rounding on him for wielding individual power to a fundamentally undemocratic extent. It’s a neat personal-political footnote to the extraordinary career recounted by Robert Caro in his 1975 biography

Untitled (Group 1), 2011

four c-prints attached to sheet metal painted in George Washington Bridge Gray with spray-finished magnets
121,9 × 243,8 cm



Installation view / *Apple NY* at D'Amelio Terras, New York, 2011



Installation view *Lengua* at Altman Siegel, San Francisco, 2011



He said, She said, 2011
cut and spray-finished steel
76,2 × 76,2 × 76,2 cm



It Goes Without Saying, 2011
laser cut steel
68,58 × 68,58 cm



Installation view *Lengua* at Altman Siegel, San Francisco, 2011



"N" as in Nancy, 2011

looped video

3' 9"



Installation view *Younger Than Jesus* at New Museum, New York, 2009



Installation view *Younger Than Jesus* at New Museum, New York, 2009



The New York Times



In Dispute, China Exploits Path to Growth

THE WHITE HOUSE SEEKS TO BLOCK DEMOS AT A.L.C.

STRIKE BY TEACHERS

State Colleges Also Face Cuts In Ambitions

Pakistan Turns Onto New and Uncertain Path



For U.S., Demos Are Weapons Of Choice in Fighting Qaeda

In Seattle, a Newspaper Lays Its Paper Routes

When is a bumper more than a bumper?



March 17, 2009, 2009

c-print

95,89 × 76,2 cm

www.pedrocera.com

Matt Keegan

Born in Manhasset, New York, 1976

Lives and works in New York

Education

2004 MFA from Columbia University, New York

2001 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, USA

1998 BFA with a Film and Media Studies Minor from Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA

Solo Exhibitions (selection)

2020 *Recycle*, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon

2019 *Matt Keegan: what was & what is*, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, New York

USE YOUR WORDS, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, USA

I Wish to Communicate With You: Corita Kent and Matt Keegan, Potts, Los Angeles, USA

2017 *REPLICATE*, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Massachusetts, USA
Generation, Participant Inc, New York

2016 *Purple*, Meyer Riegger, Berlin

2015 *Portable Document Format*, Rogaland Kunstcenter, Stavanger, Norway
And, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, USA

2014 *Matt Keegan and Anne Truitt*, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

2013 *Horizon*, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon

2011 *Lengua*, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, USA

I Apple NY, D'Amelio Terras, New York

2009 *Postcards & Calendars*, Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco

New Windows, D'Amelio Terras, New York

2008 *Now's the Time*, Anna Helwing Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

2007 *Any Day Now*, D'Amelio Terras, New York

2006 *From You to Me and Back Again*, Wallspace Gallery, New York

How to Make a Portrait, Nicole Klagsbrun (Project Room), New York and White Columns, New York

1997 *Thank You Auckland and Goodnight*, rm. 3, Auckland, New Zealand

Group Exhibition (selection)

2019 *I wish to communicate with you: Corita Kent & Matt Keegan*, POTTS, Los Angeles, USA

La terra piatta e la dimensione lirica di un luogo come se regredire fosse inventore, Maroncelli 12, Milan, Italy

Thresholds, Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich, Switzerland

Pulled in Brooklyn, International Print Center New York, New York

2017 *Cut Here*, Gordon Robichaux, New York

2016 *Purple*, Meyer Riegger, Berlin

A Travelling Show, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas, USA

LL/EE, Matt Keegan and Rachel Foullon, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon

Will and Be Going To, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, USA

The Artist's Museum, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, USA

The Sun Placed in the Abyss, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, USA

We Are the Center for Curatorial Studies, CCS Bard, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

In search of Vedaland, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, USA

C.Ar.D. Contemporary Art & Design Biennial, Consorzio Agrario Provinciale, Piacenza, Italy

Two-person show with Kay Rosen, Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, USA

Two-person show with Kay Rosen, Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, Austria

- 2015 Jamie Isenstein, Matt Keegan, Meyer Riegger, Berlin
Reconstructions: Recent Photographs and Video from the Met Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Over & Under, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York
Storylines: Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim, Guggenheim Museum, New York
- 2014 *Rencontre*, Autocenter, Berlin
No Games Inside the Labyrinth, Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin
Art at the Core, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Peekskill, New York
Fixed Variable, Hauser & Wirth, New York
- 2013 *Art for Rollins: The Alford Collection of Contemporary Art*, The Cornell Fine, Florida, USA
Wallspace Tenth Anniversary, Wallspace Gallery, New York
Yes I will Yes, American Contemporary, New York
The Cat Show, White Columns, New York
It's Over There, Simon Subal Gallery, New York
- 2012 *Y? O! G... A.*, The Kitchen, New York
Books, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon
Why Do Birds Suddenly Appear, Dusseldorf, Germany
Yeah We Friends and Shit, Josée Bienvenu Gallery, New York
Found in Translation, Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin
- 2011 *Circulate*, Fotografie Museum Amsterdam, Amsterdam
Short Stories, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, USA
Exposure: Matt Keegan, Katie Paterson, Heather Rasmussen, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA
The Air We Breathe, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA
The Anxiety of Photography, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, USA
We Are Grammar, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York
- 2010 *No More Presence*, Hunter College/The Artist's Institute, New York
Chris Johanson, Charley Harper & Matt Keegan, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, USA
Open Sesame (The Blue Floor Show), A.S.S. Gallery, New York
Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Bilbao, Spain
The Story of a Window, Neon Parc, Melbourne, Australia
S, M, L, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York
Image Transfer, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, USA
Held Up by Columns, Renwick Gallery, New York
Christmas in July, Yvon Lambert, New York
The Summer Bazaar, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York
North Drive Press Archive, SPACE: Library, London,
...And Then There Was X, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, USA
So Be It: Interventions in Printed Matter, Andrew Roth, New York
American Spirit, Crone Galerie, Berlin
\ (Lean), Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York
Contemplating the Void: Interventions in the Guggenheim Museum, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
They Knew What They Wanted, John Bergreunn Gallery, San Francisco, USA
- 2009 *Younger than Jesus*, New Museum, New York
Reach of Realism, MOCA Miami, Miami, USA
Interim in Three Rounds, Friedrich Petzel, New York
Picturing the Studio, School of the Art Institute Chicago, Chicago, USA
Phot(o)bjects, Presentation House, Vancouver, Canada
A Wild Night and a New Road, Altman Siegel, San Francisco, USA
Separate Entities, Museum 52, New York
The Garden of Forking Paths, Maisterravalbuena, Madrid

- 2008 *Optimism*, Westport Art Center, Westport, USA
Democracy in America: The National Campaign, organized by Creative Time, New York
Communication Breakdown, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York and Galerie Impaire, Paris
Catawampus (for H.D.), Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, USA
Intimacy, The Fireplace Project, East Hampton, New York
Imaginary Thing, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, USA
Rental, New York
Not so subtle subtitle, Casey Kaplan, New York
Bendover/Hangover: An Evening with Cinema Zero, White Flag Projects, St. Louis, USA
11 Sessions, , New York
Pawnshop, travels to Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands and Beijing
- 2007 *The Leisure Suite*, Leroy Neiman Gallery, Columbia University, New York
I AM Eyebeam, Gallery 400, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, USA
Catawampus (for H.D.), Shane Campbell Gallery, Oak Park, Illinois, USA
NeoIntegrity, Derek Eller Gallery, New York
Funny Shadows, Clifford Chance US, New York
Elastic Paintings and Transparent Partition: An exhibition by Karin Schneider, Forde, L'Usine, Geneva, Switzerland, Office Baroque Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
M R A I T C T H A A N M D Y, Mandrake, Los Angeles, USA
- 2006 *Please Love Me*, Frank Walker's Point Center for the Arts, Milwaukee, USA
How I Finally Accepted Fate, EFA Gallery, New York
Bring the War Home, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York, and QED, Los Angeles, USA
A Rabbit as King of the Ghosts, Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York
Mystic River, South First: ART, Brooklyn, New York, travels to: Arcadia University Art Gallery, Glenside, USA
- 2005 *Supports*, Roger Björkholmen Gallery, Stockholm
Shape Shifters, China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles, USA
A Walk in the Park, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, New York
Bebe Le Strange, D'Amelio Terras, New York
lesser new york, a Fia Backström production, Brooklyn, New York
Log Cabin, Artists Space, New York
- 2004 *A/C*, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York
LTTR Explosion!, Art in General, K8 Hardy, and Ginger Takahashi, New York
Hung, Drawn, and Quartered, Team Gallery, New York
Silhouette, Momenta Art, Brooklyn, New York
Columbia University's MFA Thesis Exhibition, Studebaker Building, New York
- 2003 *The Outlaw Series*, Fortunato Brother's Bakery, Brooklyn, New York
Catholic Cat Show, New York
24/7, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania
NFS, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York
Today's Man, John Connelly Presents and Hiromi Yoshii Gallery, New York and Tokyo
Rundgang, Kunsthochschule Kassel, Kassel, Germany
Columbia First Year MFA Exhibition, Wallach Art Gallery, New York
- 2002 *Process/ion*, Leroy Neiman Gallery, Columbia University, New York
- 2001 *Biting Style, Spitting Image*, Bass Museum, Miami, USA
- 2000 *Superduper NY*, Pierogi, Brooklyn, New York
- 1999 *Exposed*, Islip Art Museum, East Islip, USA
- Publications (selection)
- 2020 *1996*, Inventory Press, Los Angeles, USA

- 2016 *Matt Keegan: Have you seen my language?*, Publication Studio, Portland,
USA
- 2015 *Matt Keegan: OR*, Inventory Press, New York
- 2008 *Matt Keegan: AMERICAMERICA*, Printed Matter, New York

Public Collections (selection)

MoMA. Museum of Modern Art, New York
Annette and Peter Nobel Collection, Zurich, Switzerland
Frances Young Tang, Saratoga Springs, New York
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
The Alford Collection of Contemporary Art at Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, USA