

MATT KEEGAN



Born in 1976, Manhasset, NY
Lives and works in New York, NY

Over the course of his career, Matt Keegan has worked fluidly across mediums, creating sculptures, photographs, videos, and text-based works that probe the myriad ways in which art and language mediate the personal experience of physical space as well as historical, social, and political events.

Matt Keegan's work has been widely exhibited in venues including a recent collection presentation at MoMA, NY earlier this year; a public sculpture commissioned by Sculpture Center, New York, NY; at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX; Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, AT; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, Bilbao, ES, and Berlin, DE; The Kitchen, New York, NY; The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY. In 2025, Keegan will have a solo exhibition at the Athenaeum at the University of Georgia.

Keegan's artistic practice often parallels contemporaneous publishing projects, and at times a confluence of the two modes of production has compelled the artist to develop new arenas for artistic discourse and collaboration. In 2008 Keegan published *AMERICAMERICA*, an artist book commissioned and published by Printed Matter, NY, which focuses on the year 1986 and its correspondence with 2008. The book opens with documentation of a 2007 road trip, inspired by Hands Across America, in which Keegan cast the hands of mayors located between New York and New Mexico. In 2003 Keegan co-founded the annual publication North Drive Press with Lizzy Lee, a childhood friend. Numbering five issues between 2004 and 2010, the unconventional project operated as an alternative space for artist-to-artist interviews and art multiples. North Drive Press is included in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the New York Public Library, The Library at the Hessel Museum and Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, and the Beinecke Library at Yale University, among others.

Keegan's work is represented in numerous museum and private collections worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, NY; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, among others. He received his MFA from Columbia University in 2004, attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2001, and his BFA from Carnegie Mellon University in 1998. Keegan is currently a Senior Critic in the Painting & Printmaking Department at Yale University.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
September 9 2024

Frankfurter Allgemeine

GALLERY IN DÜSSELDORF AND COLOGNE

Ready for Transformation

By Julia Stellmann 02.09.2024, 13:09 Reading time: 3 minutes

In the Berthold Pott Gallery, the eternal cycle of Joseph Beuys' "Ja, Ja, Ja, Ja, Ja, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee" accompanies the walk through the group exhibition of the same name in Cologne. The sound work forms the background noise for the artistic exploration of repetition. The show curated by the artist Florian Meisenberg shows itself to be well thought out when it impresses with a combination of two low-hanging photographs by Georg Herold and rotating everyday objects by Nathaniel de Large in the entrance area. In order to structure the space, Meisenberg installs his own work as a visual barrier that can only be crossed in a crouched position. He succeeds in "putting stress" on the very different pieces in the show, in his own words.

He places Matt Keegan's "More like Mother, More like Father", intended as a wall piece, on the floor and inscribes it with a chalk drawing of finiteness. In the back area, the patterned wallpaper by Thomas Bayrle and Rebekka Benzenberg's extremely stretched tights almost merge into a single work (2,300 to 107,000 euros, until October 15).



BOMB
December 7 2020

BOMB

Matt Keegan's 1996



(Inventory Press, 2020)

In 1996, Betsy Sussler's editorial letter for this magazine announced that BOMB was celebrating its fifteenth anniversary by going online (with live chats!)—Netscape, anyone? My first email password (suggested by a techy elder) was "forgetmenot"—sometimes I do forget that bygone temporality of slow info, before the algorithm colonized our DNA. Never mind the Wayback Machine: artist Matt Keegan has produced 1996, a sleek but sensitive compendium of cultural production and politics three years in the making and spanning more than two decades. With the visual sagacity of Brian Hochberger's design, it mimics a glossy magazine (its first spread reproduces the covers of TIME) and echoes the media-obsessive '90s. The book presents critical analyses alongside chatty anecdotes from artists and writers who were young adults in the '90s, plus an absorbing Q&A with those who were born in 1996—linking two generations with very disparate experiences.

The eponymous year was a crucial one in the US, marking President Bill Clinton's reelection. The left's slide to the right had commenced. The North American Free Trade Agreement had gone into effect just two years prior and would irrevocably transform trade, labor, farming, immigration, and wealth distribution for decades to come. The loss of human life to AIDS was then estimated at 6.4 million worldwide, and for those of us who came of age during the epidemic, the message was that sex (and silence) was synonymous with death. Evangelical right-wing ghouls exulted in a danse macabre of homophobia, censorship, and sabotage. It was not a particularly rosy time, but when is it ever?

Still, it's tempting to dip into '90s nostalgia, especially when our present moment seems to be the worst one. As Martine Syms says in a discussion with Nicole Otero: "I'm just trying to stay alive." *1996* ties past to present in an intergenerational conversation across time and place, from a reprinted essay by José Esteban Muñoz about *Real World* star and activist Pedro Zamora to a friendly eight-person trip down memory lane titled "An Aroma of '90s Gay Smells." Michael Bullock's "Cruising Diary: 1991–2001" is a firsthand account of gay online culture; Svetlana Kitto traces the work of activist Charlotte Bunch and others to "codify women's rights as a human rights issue." And Mychal Denzel Smith's study of shadowy Democrats, "A Lesson to Be Learned: On Clinton's Approval of the 1994 Crime Bill and the 1996 Welfare Reform Act," outlines two hostile measures whose repercussions reverberate deeply now.

1996 does not aim to encapsulate so much as contextualize an accelerated trajectory of global transition. Fashion, film, art, riot grrrl, and raves are discussed alongside queer representation, media obsessions, HIV/AIDS, punitive legislative grabs, immigration, and the deliberate suppression of climate science by politicians and the fossil-fuel industry. If it sounds like a lot, that's because it is, and it can't be otherwise. As Black lives are imperiled, as ICE terrorizes people, as we contend with another excruciating election season and crises too numerous to list, understanding what got us here is a means to stave off amnesia. In Keegan's introduction he makes the case for doing the "collaborative and collective work to sustain a better future." With a vigilant spirit of inquiry, *1996* digs deep, extracting clarity from a legacy of deceit, while keeping humor and nuance intact.

The New York Times
June 21 2019

The New York Times

11 Outdoor Installations to See in New York This Summer

Matt Keegan

Marketing signs for newly-built apartment buildings are everywhere around Court Square Park in Long Island City, along with construction cranes and scaffolding, signaling that more units are on the way. Amid all this is Matt Keegan's "[what was & what is.](#)" An off-site installation for the [SculptureCenter](#), it consists of a rectangular glass box with one mirrored side. A horizontal scroll reads, "For a long time this neighborhood was about what will be, and now I think it's about what is." The quotation, from a developer, appeared in a 2017 New York Times [article](#) about the area's "skyward" development, and exemplifies how real estate professionals sometimes see the city as being in service to new development. *Through Aug. 18.*



artnet
June 10 2019

artnet

Editors' Picks: 19 Things Not to Miss in New York's Art World This Week



Matt Keegan, *what was & what is* (2019) installation view, Court Square Park, Long Island City, New York. Photo by Kyle Knodell courtesy the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

8. **"Matt Keegan: what was & what is (II)"** at Court Square Park

For SculptureCenter's summer public art installation, "Matt Keegan: what was & what is," the artist has placed a empty glass box atop an existing concrete expanse. The floor features a photograph of the interior of a nearby one-bedroom apartment, for rent at \$3,500–3,700 a month. Also this week, the artist continues conversations with his father at the site of the artwork, discussing people and topics such as Robert Moses, urban development, and Keegan's experiences as a bar owner in Long Island City.

Frieze
June 1 2019

FRIEZE

Matt Keegan Complicates Childhood Feelings

The artist walks a fine line between nostalgic irreverence and wry critique



The aseptic white cube is a canny fit for Matt Keegan's newest body of work. Mining an archive of educational tools used in the instruction of language, for his fourth solo exhibition at Altman-Siegel Gallery Keegan has created a series of sculptures, photographs and videos designed to return the viewer to a juvenile frame of mind. Remember the feeling of fiddling with an array of uncomplicated children's toys in a dentist's waiting room, queasily anticipating the hygienist calling your name? The institutional whitewash, the fluorescent lighting play to this feeling of being held, observed, in uncomfortable, dumb limbo, as you try to work out the meanings of inscrutable shapes (Keegan's 'Cutouts', a series begun in 2014, are undeniably Rorschachian), or struggle to decipher the systems that underlie a series of didactic compositions (the large, wall-mounted 'Have You Seen My Language?', 2016/19, comprises 50 C-prints matching mass-produced ESL [English as a Second Language] flashcards to objects in the artist's home). The feeling is intensified by the presence of an iterative sculpture, *Puppy Puzzle* (2019), in which a different piece of an enlarged puzzle is absent in each of three versions. Keegan sourced the original puzzle depicted on the flashcard for the word 'puzzle' from the set used in 'Have You Seen My Language?' but, rather than deploy it in the photographic series, gave it blown-up, embodied form.



Matt Keegan, 'Use Your Words', 2019, exhibition view. Courtesy: the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco

The gesture here – the scaled, perfect enlargement – has been a feature of Keegan's practice for a number of years and is the dominant formal conceit behind the 'Cutouts': a group of symmetrical, wall-mounted, powder-coated steel forms based on original hand-cut paper templates. These pieces do not feel incongruent within the context of Keegan's tongue-in-cheek pedagogical playhouse; they bear a resemblance to kindergarten-classroom paper snowflakes. Though their relationship to language and words is tenuous, they are nonetheless elegant, beautiful objects. A concurrent exhibition at Potts, Los Angeles, pairs Keegan's 'Cutouts (C is for Corita)' (2018), a slew of silkscreened paper cutouts, with Corita Kent's 'International Signal Code Alphabet' (1968), an A–Z, 26-serigraph series in which she whimsically reconstrued the International Code of Signals. There, in affective dialogue with Kent's works, Keegan's intimately scaled cutouts assume a more nuanced, meaningful relationship to their referents.



Matt Keegan, 'Have You Seen My Language?', 2016/19, 50 C-prints, each 51 x 38 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco

Since 2010, Keegan has referred to a deck of amateur flashcards made by his mother, an ESL teacher; each 1:08-minute long video responds to one of these cards. Cobbled together from 1990s-era mass-market print media, his mother's cards reflected the economic – and by extension aesthetic – values of the Clinton years (hammering home the association: Keegan's inclusion of a plaster cast of a Bill Clinton caricature mask). The videos – all 2019 – are: *Ready for Work*, a Teutonic male model dressing for Wall Street; *Fellow Travelers*, a group of New York City subway riders assigned typological epithets ('Chinatown Homies', 'Indian Hipsters', 'Do-Good Bluebloods', etc.); *2 Gallons of Milk*, two fridge-cold gallons of milk beading with sweat; and *College Graduate*, in which a young

Latina speaks in sub-titled Spanish to her abuela at a party thrown in honour of her having ‘worked her ass on’. (The English language idiomatic slippage cues the granddaughter’s ‘haha’ correction ‘No, it’s work your ass off, abuela.’) The videos, despite their identical length, do not totally cohere as a group. Then again, close examination of ‘Have You Seen My Language?’ yields similar inconsistencies: there is no one system at work in the placement of the ESL flashcards – sometimes the relationship is 1:1 (a card of a toilet affixed to a toilet); sometimes formal (a card of a configuration of blocks held before a similarly shaped city skyline); sometimes associative (a card of a pair of glasses placed on a bedside table). Whether this dissonance is intentionally antic is unclear; Keegan walks a fine line between nostalgic irreverence and wry critique of a system designed to educate, though vulnerable to satire.

Matt Keegan, ‘Use Your Words’ was on view at Altman Siegel, San Francisco, from 28 February until 20 April 2019.

Artforum
April 2019

ARTFORUM

Corita Kent and Matt Keegan

POTTS

By Andy Campbell ☒



View of "Corita Kent and Matt Keegan," 2019. Top row: Matt Keegan, "Cutouts (c is for Corita)," 2019; Bottom row: Corita Kent, "International Signal Code Alphabet," 1968.

Amid the swelling civil unrest that would culminate in the international protest movements of 1968, a nun in Los Angeles was wavering in her faith. "I'm really frightened to say this," Sister Corita Kent (1912–1986) wrote in a letter to a friend, "but everything appears different to me, even God, and I'm so afraid that I'm losing the foundation of my belief." Soon thereafter, Kent took a sabbatical from her chairship of art at her order's college and absconded to Cape Cod for the summer; by the end of her time there, she had decided to leave the order and renounce her vows. During this soul-searching break, Kent would watch the boats moving in and out of the harbor; inspired by the twenty-six letter flags of the International Code of Signals, a system used to communicate messages between ships, she created an elaborate series of serigraphic prints.

The installation of Kent's series "International Signal Code Alphabet," 1968, at the Potts gallery might be best appreciated within this larger frame of her crisis of faith. Installed alongside a suite of responsive works by Matt Keegan, Kent's prints are hung in a neat horizontal line and faced with highly reflective glass that sometimes frustrates looking. Like much of Kent's output, the prints feature dense layers of meaning, graphically finessed to the point of deceptive simplicity. The print for *B*, which is usually read as *Bravo* (and communicates that a ship is unloading, off-loading, or carrying dangerous goods), pairs the red polygonal flag with the corresponding letter in large calligraphy and a few "handwritten" lines from W. H. Auden's "Prologue at Sixty" (1967):

CAN SIXTY MAKE SENSE TO SIXTEEN-PLUS?

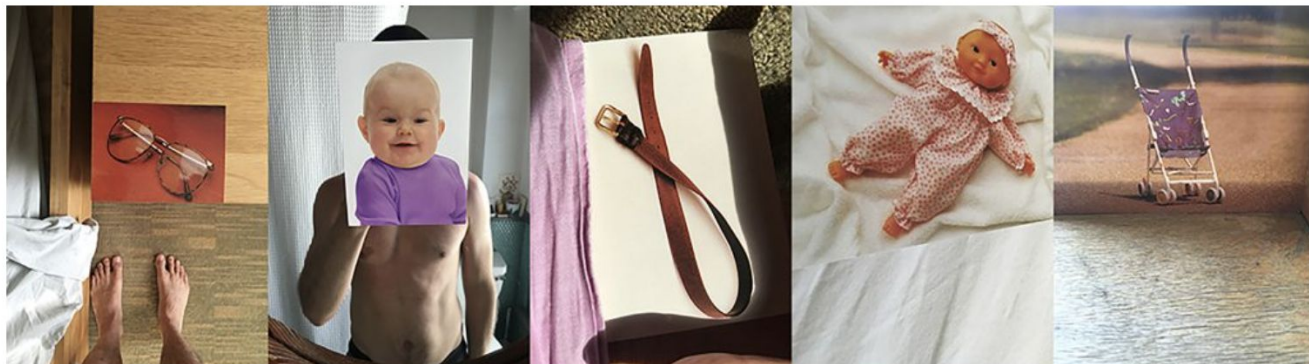
WHAT HAS MY CAMP IN COMMON WITH THEIRS, WITH BUTTONS
AND BEARDS AND BE-INS?

MUCH I HOPE. IN ACTS IT IS WRITTEN

TASTE WAS NO PROBLEM AT PENTECOST.

San Francisco Chronicle
March 15 2019

San Francisco Chronicle



"Have you seen my language (Group 1)" is by Matt Keegan.
Photo: Altman Siegel, San Francisco

Language as art: Language and its workings are an abiding interest of New York artist Matt Keegan. "Use Your Words," Keegan's fourth show at Altman Siegel, is on view through April 20.

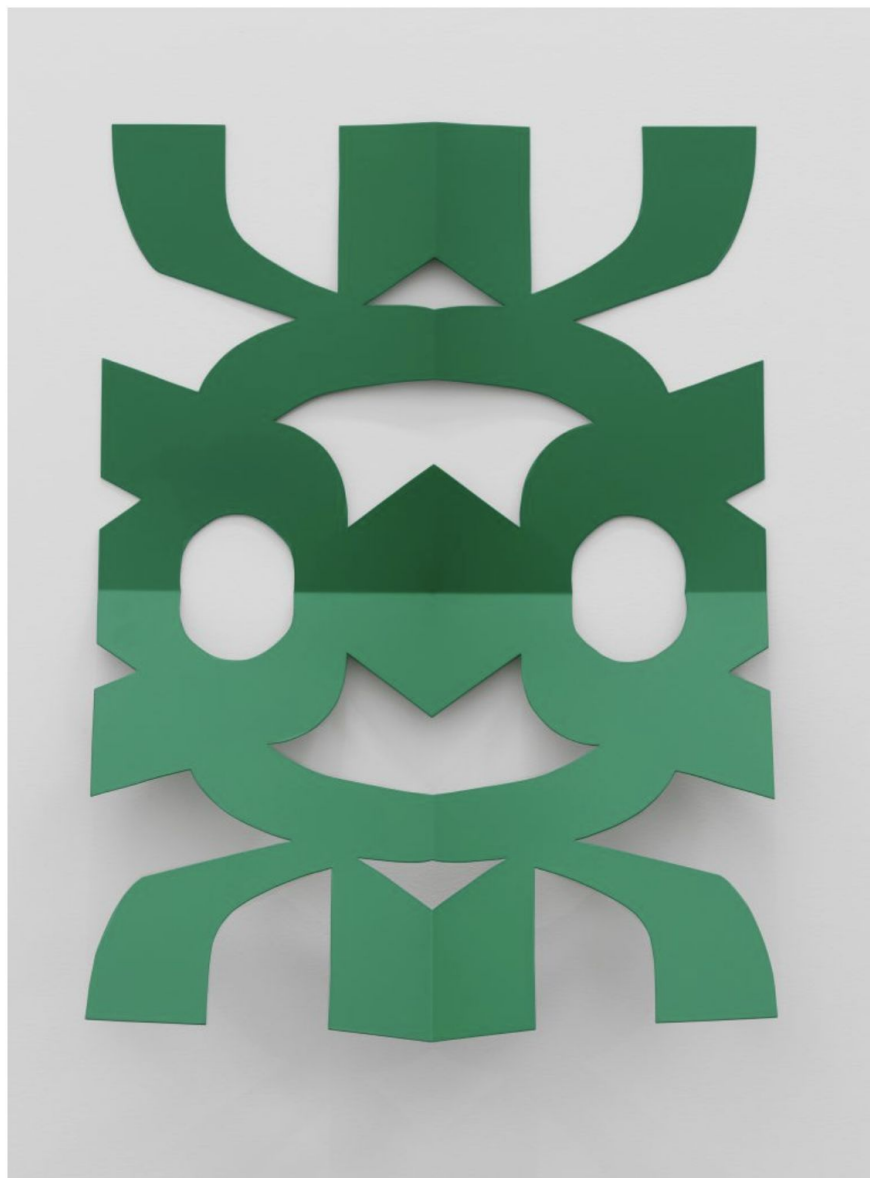
The exhibition requires patience, a demand of many Altman Siegel presentations. Five laser-cut steel sculptures are quirkily attractive, dense with powder-coat color. They are interspersed among photographic and video works presented in cheery overlap.

I prefer to look first, then read whatever a gallery has to offer. A handout at the front desk is indispensable in this case.

One 2016 series, called "Have you seen my language," consists of photographs of language-teaching flash cards placed in nondescript settings. A card picturing eyeglasses is on a bedside nightstand, where actual glasses might be found. A flashcard with a baby's chubby head, affixed to a mirror, replaces the head of the photographer seen in reflection. An image of water becomes a hazard on a sunny garden path. Fifty such images play upon the conundrum of truth and its report.

Another set of visual flashcards is the source for new video works. They were cut by the artist's mother some years ago from magazine advertisements, to use in her work as a teacher of English as a second language. Shot in a faux-commercial style, the videos slyly debunk the myths propagated by the original images.

Those sculptures, too, suggest elements of language. Based on cardboard models constructed by the artist, they propose new characters, part of a new alphabet of indeterminate meaning. In that, of course, they are like all art.



"Cutout (Signal Green)" by Matt Keegan is among his works on view at Altman Siegel.
Photo: Altman Siegel, San Francisco

"Matt Keegan: Use Your Words": 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday.
Through April 20. Free. Altman Siegel, 1150 25th St., S.F. 415-576-9300. <http://altmansiegel.com>

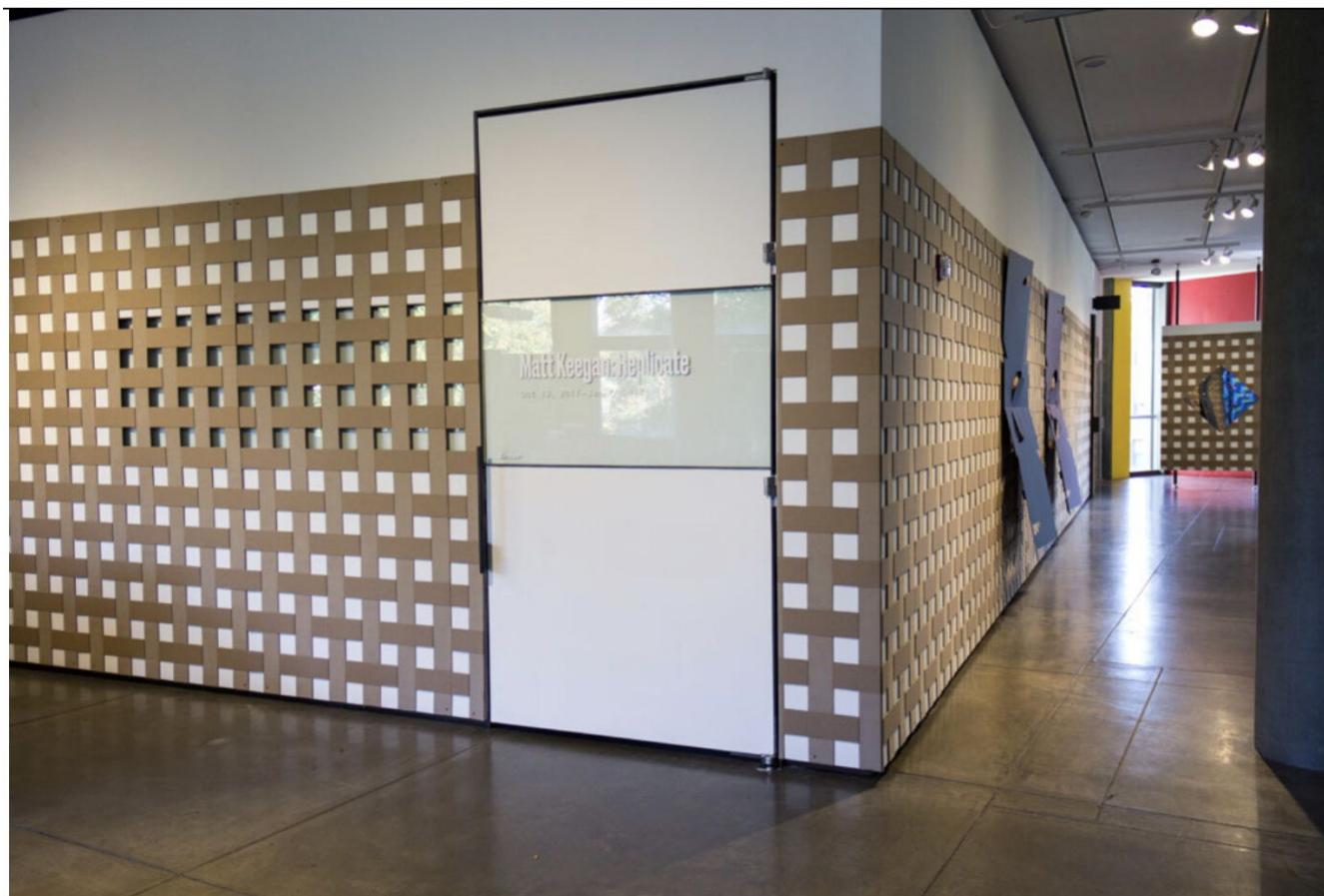
BOMB
December 15 2017

BOMB

Word Prompts: Matt Keegan's *Replicate*

An exhibition exploring forms of repetition and difference.

BY CLAIRE BARLIANT



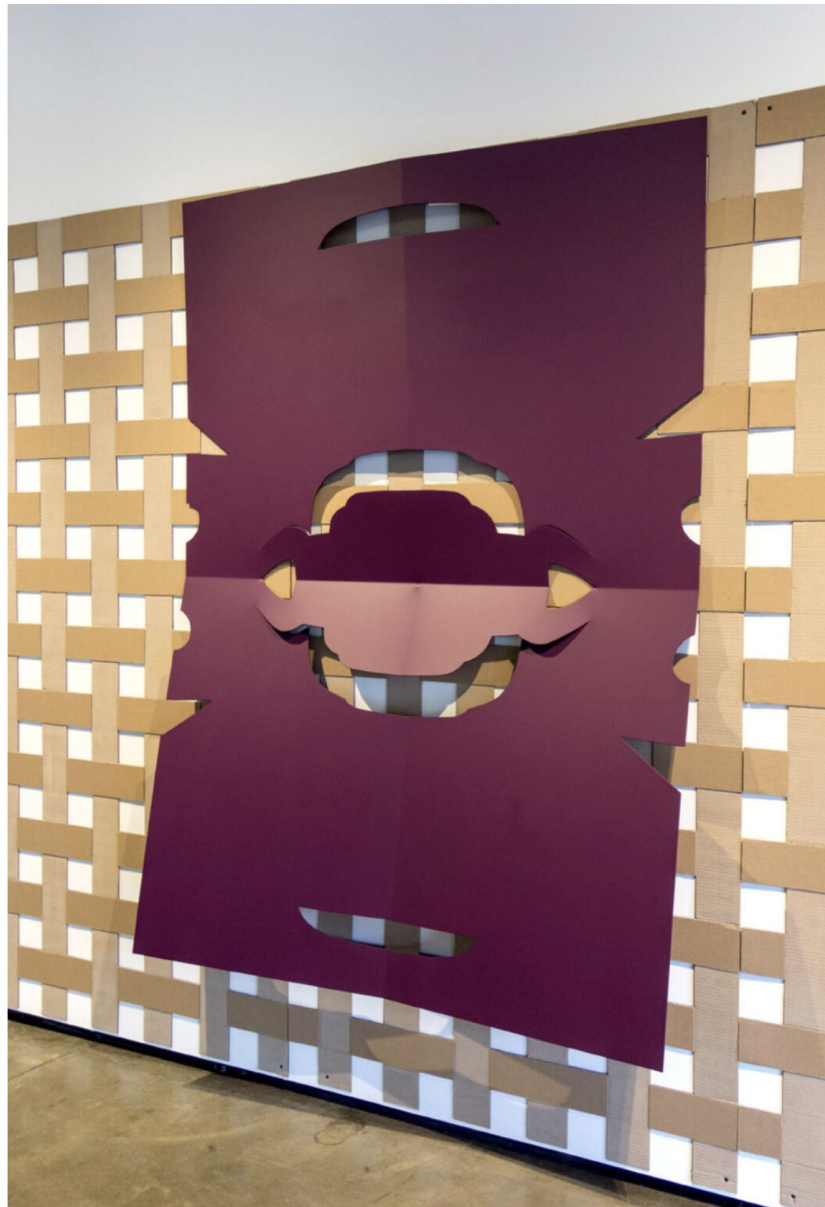
Matt Keegan: Replicate, 2017. Installation view. Courtesy Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University.

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.



Matt Keegan, Channel 1 of *Generation*, 2016. Two-channel video (color, sound). 44:30 min. Installation view. Courtesy Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University.

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 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.



Matt Keegan, Detail of *Cutouts (Echo)*, 2016. One of pair, powder-coated steel, iPod, 2 transducers, amp with looped audio composed by Sergei Tcherepnin. 58 x 80 inches (each). Courtesy Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University.

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.



Matt Keegan, *Corbu Lattice*, 2017. Pair of two panels, cotton and rayon. Panel one: 111 x 141 inches; panel two: 132 x 141 inches. Courtesy Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University.

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.

The New York Times
February 9 2017

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

By **Roberta Smith**, **Holland Cotter** and Will Heinrich

Feb. 9, 2017

MATT KEEGAN

Through Sunday. Participant Inc., 253 East Houston Street, Manhattan; 212-254-4334, participantinc.org.



Matt Keegan's show at Participant Inc. is titled "Generation," as is the two-channel, 45-minute video installation that is its centerpiece. Courtesy of the artist and Participant Inc

Tolstoy may have explained the difference between happy and unhappy families: The first are all alike; the second are unhappy in their own way. But he never mentioned average families for whom such feelings twist together. For that, there is Matt Keegan's show at Participant Inc., his first solo in New York since 2011. It is titled ["Generation,"](#) as is the two-channel, 45-minute video installation that is its centerpiece.

Executed in an uninflected D.I.Y. documentary style, "Generation" is alternately funny, poignant and sad. It stars three generations of Mr. Keegan's immediate family, including his parents, siblings, nieces and a precocious nephew. Each of them is asked to define a series of fairly charged words, including "love," "sex," "race," "anger," "nationalism," "immigrant," "masculine" and "history." It's all quite simple, but what you learn about family dynamics, knowledge and language — as well as the wisdom of age — is amazing. The youngest niece describes race as a competition; Mr. Keegan's father sees it as "something just made up."

The video includes a few interviews in the subjects' habitats, and occasionally Mr. Keegan asks people to describe a word as a physical object, while the second screen illustrates responses in animated form. Other animations include a pitcher of water poured over a human brain, nourishing it. Mr. Keegan's interests being multimedia, the show also includes three large, handsome wall pieces in powder-coated steel seemingly based on bits of folded-and-cut paper. They emit low vibrations, serving as speakers for audio tracks generated with the sound artist Sergei Tcherepnin using the wall reliefs themselves as drums. Their tones work well as ambient accompaniment for the video. It's a little like having a large, friendly family pet in the next room.

ROBERTA SMITH

The New Yorker
January 26 2017

THE NEW YORKER

In this suite of charmingly self-effacing collaborations, Keegan excels at letting his materials—whether powder-coated steel or members of his own family—speak for themselves. He spent a few days in the gallery with the composer and artist Sergei Tcherepnin, gently banging on pieces of wall-mounted steel and recording the results; a few simple wires transformed the sculptures into speakers emitting their own clanking soundtrack. (Despite their resemblance to construction-paper cutouts, the objects' large size and dark colors lend them a surprising dignity.) In his two-channel video "Generation," Keegan shares such gems as his precocious nephew's endearingly tongue-tied definition of love, his mother's strangely heartbreaking declaration that she doesn't fear clouds, and his divorced father's advice on sex: "Never miss an opportunity." (*Participant Inc.*; *Through Feb. 12.*)



The New York Times

Retailing as a Forum for Art

Sept. 4, 2013



THE INTERSECTION of fashion and art has produced some strange bedfellows over the last decade (Richard Prince purses for Louis Vuitton; Cindy Sherman's Chanel series), but Kris Van Assche, the Dior Homme designer, takes a straightforward approach to art appreciation. He hires artists to create pieces for his stores, like the poetic Robert Montgomery light sculpture that hangs in the SoHo store.

The latest piece, being installed this week at Dior Homme at 17 East 57th Street, is by Matt Keegan, who also works in words. Mr. Keegan created an eight-foot-tall sculpture, left, that will sit in the front window. It's made of curving mirrored steel engraved with text that reads "How Do I Look?" Each "O" is completely cut out, like a porthole, so viewers on the street will be able to see into the store, while also seeing their own reflections.

"There's a number of ways to look at it," Mr. Keegan said. "But my interest was not in the merger of disciplines. It was in seeing how the sculpture functions on a heavily trafficked street."