

ARTFORUM

Matt Keegan

D'AMELIO TERRAS

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 varietals, "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 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 of Moses, *The Power Broker*, dovetailing nicely with the younger Keegan's diverse vision of New York as an endlessly captivating mess of designs, compromises, and accidents good and bad.

—Michael Wilson



View of "Matt Keegan," 2011.

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

New York

Matt Keegan

D'AMELIO TERRAS
525 West 22nd Street, Ground Floor
April 23–June 18

A great amount of work—research and its resulting material objects—has been put into Matt Keegan's latest and meticulously thought out solo exhibition at D'Amelio Terras. With the cool remove of a cultural anthropologist and the pragmatic aesthetic of a designer, Keegan has amassed a visual archive—*cum*—love song to the city under the moniker "I [Apple] NY," which he created with David Reinfurt—a wink to the ubiquitous "I [Heart] NY" logo whose creator, Milton Glaser, is interviewed by the artist in lieu of a press release.

The main gallery can be experienced as a microcosm of the built environment; the perimeter offers a frieze of color photographs (snapped by Keegan throughout the five boroughs) attached to sheet metal panels painted—as are four of five freestanding sculptures—in the exact colors of New York City bridges. An aluminum mantelpiece reading CIRCULATION (all works 2011) converses with stacked posters designed by Jakob Kolding and copies of "A History of New York," an "unlimited edition" pictorial reader chronicling city history from Henry Hudson through 9/11 and, significantly, the death of Jane Jacobs.

The living city is never so neatly composed, and Keegan's reference-laden nested logic leaves little room for intuitive response. Until, that is, one stumbles upon *Biography/Biographer*, a nine-minute documentary looping in a disconnected room. The video provides a political-is-personal narrative entry point to the aggregate through the artist's father, Ed, who charmingly recollects his teenage employment at a private golf course frequented by Robert Moses, the "master builder" and czarlike visionary of midcentury urban renewal. Ed's storytelling offers historical context for the sociopolitical layers we move through today and pushes the motif of "the city" toward an imagined landscape, where the infrastructure of memory is as fundamental to urban experience as parkways and bridges. Referencing Robert Caro's 1974 book *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, the elder Keegan muses, "It wasn't just a biography; it was a part of my life."



View of "I Apple NY," 2011

— Corrine Fitzpatrick

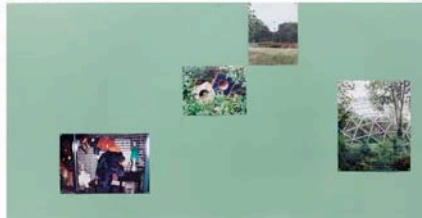
ARTFORUM

BEST OF 2011

The Artists' Artists

TO TAKE STOCK OF THE PAST YEAR, ARTFORUM CONTACTED AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF ARTISTS TO FIND OUT WHICH EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS WERE, IN THEIR EYES, THE VERY BEST OF 2011.

Matt Keegan, *Untitled (Group 14)*, 2011, four color photographs, painted sheet metal, magnets, 48 x 96".



SARA VANDERBEEK

"Matt Keegan: I Apple NY" (D'Amelio Terras, New York) Much like New York itself, Matt Keegan's show "I Apple NY" was immersive and layered, pushing me to reconsider not just what the nature of a city is but what an art exhibition can be. Every piece felt intimate and personal yet also communicated more universal concerns. From his dynamic image arrangements along the walls to his poignant book *A History of New York*, published in conjunction with the show, Keegan offered us an affecting reminder that New York, as a collective entity, resonates not only with the histories embedded in its infrastructure but with the ideals, emotions, dreams, and struggles of the people who live here.



Matt Keegan, "I Apple NY"



D'Amelio Terras, through June 18
(see Chelsea)

An aggregation of sculptures, photographs, texts, objects and printed material, Matt Keegan's composite portrait of New York City doubles as a reflection on art, society and power. In keeping with the artist's interest in community (Keegan was also a cofounder of North Drive Press, a now-defunct annual art publication that functioned as a showcase for emerging artists), many of the works in the show are collaborations with others.

An interview with Milton Glaser, designer of the I♥NY logo, takes the place of a press release for the exhibition. Keegan and David Reinfurt's variation on Glaser's design—featuring a cheerfully redundant apple instead of a heart—is emblazoned on the entrance to the gallery. A video features the artist's father, who reminisces about working, between the ages of 13 and 21, for a private golf club

frequented by Robert Moses—the controversial and fantastically powerful overseer of Gotham's mid-20th-century urban renewal.

The main part of the show, resembling a cross between a schoolroom and an exhibition of minimalist sculpture, is an array of the artist's own photographs of the city, mounted on sheet-metal panels—painted the colors of New York City bridges—running around the walls. Among the pictures of advertising signs, shabby apartment interiors and Con Edison trucks is a shot of dour Westbeth, the affordable housing complex for artists, with Julian Schnabel's hot-pink folly, Palazzo Chupi, rising behind it.

The show also features more metal panels bent into geometric sculptures, a set of curtains printed with images of book spines, a poem, a visual history of New York based on Ric Burns's eight-part PBS series *New York: A Documentary Film*, a sign and a poster. It's a busy exhibit, but appropriately so for a largely absorbing vision of the city as ever-shifting social space.
—Anne Doran

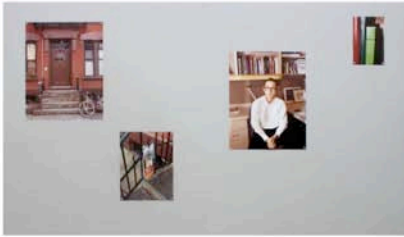


Don't worry...

FlashArt

MATT KEEGAN

D'AMELIO TERRAS - NEW YORK



Above: MATT KEEGAN, *Untitled (Group 4)*, 2011. 4 C-prints attached to sheet metal painted in George Washington Bridge Gray with spray-finished magnets, 122 x 244 cm. Right: MATT KEEGAN, "I Apple NY," 2011. Installation view at D'Amelio Terras, New York. Courtesy D'Amelio Terras, New York.

A cat inside a neighborhood bodega, a portrait of editor Alex Gartenfeld and a boy donning a yarmulke while playing chess in a city park. Arranged in groupings of four on 15 different pieces of sheet metal, Keegan's photographs are hung with simple magnets, welcomingly evoking the informality of an art school crit room. In combination with the sheet metal that wraps around the gallery's

walls are five sculptures made of the same material (with titles like *Untitled [Pulaski Red]* or *Untitled [Federal Blue]*). Polished as "I Apple New York" appears, it avoids feeling over-designed or fatuous. Instead, it sharply brings up a conversation New Yorkers in general, and non-New Yorkers alike, love to discuss — the city and themselves in relation to it. Far from nostalgic or kitsch, these straightforward images record the assorted minutiae that comprise the city. They are less like the scenes in Zoe Leonard's ruminative "Analog" series or the paragon photographs of Weegee, and more akin to iPhone snapshots taken by sauntering denizens on indistinct street corners. Displayed on a pedestal is the text-less book *A History of New York* (2011), which begins with a speculative etching of Henry Hudson, the eponymous discoverer of the Hudson River, and ends with a stock photo of two women on the LCD display of a point-and-shoot camera. Aside from chronologically illustrating the events and figures that made the city both remarkable and lamentable, the book reminds us that images can construct a place's identity far

more than they actually can document it. In *Biography/Biographer* (2011), Keegan employs a familiar documentary video style as his father recalls a visit to a golf club he once worked at by the controversial urban planner Robert Moses, the man championed by some and vilified by others for shaping the metropolis as we know it today. "I Apple New York" doesn't try to present facts or critically focus on issues straining the city. Instead, it presents the impressions of one man in a city of millions; there is something that feels very genuine about Keegan's attempt.

Alexander Ferrando





THE NEW YORKER

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN: ART

MATT KEEGAN

May 23, 2011 page 16

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

MATT KEEGAN

This valentine to New York—the accompanying book contains a wonderful interview with Milton Glaser, of “I ♥ NY” fame—like the city itself, is a little all over the place. The gallery walls are lined with random photographs of the city: a white boy wearing a yarmulke playing chess against a black man in a hoodie; a view of a polluted waterway between Brooklyn and Queens; a futon left on a sidewalk; a cat inside a bodega. A wall-mounted metal sculpture reads “circulation” from two directions. The show is a portrait of a city in constant flux, both exasperating and enthralling. Through June 18. (D’Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-352-9460.)

FOCUS

Matt Keegan

Historical, social and political questions: 'how did we get here?' by Naomi Fry

In the summer of 2007, the New York-based artist Matt Keegan embarked on a cross-country road trip. Along with two artist friends, Kenny Anderson and Erin Fetherman, Keegan was following in the footsteps of 'Hands Across America', a 1986 fundraiser in which millions formed a human chain – stretching from New York to California – as part of an effort to thwart homelessness. After he and his friends had made plaster casts of the hands of several mayors (and also some regular citizens) whose towns were located along the way, Keegan published a book, *AMERICAMERICA* (2008), which comprised a range of visual and written materials. Ephemera connected to the 'Hand Across America' fundraiser (as well as its retracing) were included, along with reproductions of art works made that year, newspaper clippings about the socio-political climate of the mid-1980s (the AIDS crisis, economic inequity), interviews with artists and activists, advertisements and tabloid covers. As Keegan explained in his introduction, the gathering of these elements sought to examine the following question: 'how did we get here?'

Though often dealing with historical, social and political questions, Keegan is rarely interested in creating a direct, easily graspable narrative with which to answer them. In this sense, *AMERICAMERICA* is a good starting point to discuss the artist's highly varied social-cum-materialist-cum-conceptual work. As in the road trip and the book, Keegan's approach is distinguished by a reliance on the collaborative and sociable aspects of art-making; a sampler-like sensibility towards cultural artefacts and an understanding of textuality, broadly, and print culture, specifically. It also demonstrates an attitude towards the socio-political sphere that is energetic and quirky, committed and coded.

With its elegantly restrained, often 'design-y' appearance, Keegan's work could be described as using a random didacticism (or, perhaps, didactic randomness). He asks his viewer to decipher the deceptively autonomous signs he provides and make something of them. For his 2009 solo show at Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco, for instance, Keegan exhibited a range of photographs and objects which, apart from their shared connection to some form of timekeeping, appeared cryptic, almost pointedly so. A photograph of the artist, his face obscured by the front page of *The New York Times*, offered no initial clues (March 17, 2009); another, of a re-photographed calendar produced by Smith News Corp – the first magazine distributorship in northern California – bearing a pretty, generic image of a San Francisco street is equally enigmatic (May, 2009, both 2009). But when considering these pieces alongside several others in the space (a piece of sheetrock leaning against the wall, etched with the days of the week; calendars from the 1950s to 1990s on loan from the San Francisco GLBT Historical Society archive; a photograph of a handsome young man in profile, with the word 'Tuesdays' logoed on his sunglasses), they slowly became a form of language, a way to communicate the experience of a particular time spent at a particular place – in this case, the artist's own stay in the Bay Area – and, following this, actively engage with that area's historical, political and social terrain.

'Milton Glaser', the title of Keegan's current solo show, at D'Amelio Terras gallery, New York, is accompanied by an altered rendering of the legendary graphic designer's I ♥ NY logo (in which the heart is replaced by an apple – a collaboration with David Reinfurt). This appropriation and tweaking could perhaps be understood as a skeptical critique of popular design, but Keegan's long, admiring interview with the

Below left:
March 17, 2009
2009
Mounted digital
c-type print
96×76 cm

Below middle:
A History of New York
2011
Page from the
artist's book
24×19×3 cm

Opposite page:
I Apple NY
Logo designed by
David Reinfurt, Apple
illustration supplied by
Will Holder for de Appel
Arts Centre, Amsterdam
2011
Electronic file

Below right:
Untitled (Group 6)
2011
One of four c-type prints
20×25 cm

modest Glaser, which serves as the show's press release, signals otherwise. What splits the difference here is Keegan's appreciation of Glaser's graphic language as a way of both binding a community as well as interpreting it. In the show, the artist similarly shares his own visual enthusiasms, which are all connected in some way to New York, and are expressed in various way – from a video of the artist's father speaking of his days as a caddy on urban developer Robert Moses' private golf course (*Biography/Biographer*), to a visuals-only publication (*A History of New York*, both 2011) which loosely follows the nearly 400-year history of the city as it is laid out in filmmaker Ric Burns' US public television series, *New York: A Documentary Film* (1999).

Employing a range of media, the exhibition moves fluidly between the historical and the personal. The walls of the gallery's front room are lined with 15 consecutive sheets of metal (painted in what turn out to be the eight official colours used in New York City's bridges), on which Keegan has placed a series of 60 photographs, four to a sheet, taken on his walks around the city's boroughs: *Untitled (Group 1)* and *Untitled (Group 15)* (both 2011). The work prizes visual flow over narrative: two pictures of manhole covers are followed by an image of two men, viewed from the back as they walk down the street wearing nearly identical black jackets, caps and jeans; a photograph of three wild-haired poodles held aloft is followed by a picture of a beard trimmer still in its grotty box, and so on. In these photos we have, on the one hand, a classic example of a Saussurean sequence in which meaning is determined by difference; what we also encounter here, though, is a reminder that once that difference is brought to light, we should begin to pay attention to how these particular parts form a larger collective meaning. As Glaser suggests in the show's press release, in response to Keegan's question about the work of his teacher Giorgio Morandi: 'when you regard it with some attention, you discover that the range is fantastic. The modesty of the paintings and their lack of drama keep you from noticing at first. Later you feel changed by the experience, and you no longer look at the world the same way.'





Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

Father Figure: Matt Keegan Takes on Robert Moses's New York

by [adam o'reilly](#) 05/10/11

In his third show at D'Amelio Terras in New York, Matt Keegan explores the iconography of New York. Take, for instance, the show's title, a collaboration with designer David Reinfurt, which replaces the "♥" in "I♥NY" with an apple—and not just any apple, but the logo for De Appel, the contemporary art center in Amsterdam. "I'm very interested in the space between language and photography or language and image, so I love the pause that this may generate for the viewer," Keegan told A.i.A. prior to the opening. The result is a statement that reads pictographically, "I Apple New York," and a set of hermetic references.



Fifteen panels of sheet metal are mounted on three of the gallery's walls, creating an architectural wrap and mat. The colors on the monochrome sheets match those of the bridges that connect the boroughs of New York. On this standardized armature, Keegan scattered 60 photographs he took while walking the city—a meandering set of manhole covers, storefronts, streets, people and objects that are of personal interest and often surprising humor. A portrait of the New York subway ad celebrity, Dr. Zizmor, shows him posing for Keegan's camera. Nearby hang an image of an American Windsor chair in a white apartment, the ad on the back of a U-Haul truck and a nondescript brick wall. All are familiar but disorienting sights. Because of their relative anonymity, most could have been taken on any number of streets in New York's grid.

Not least because Keegan photographs manholes, this show invokes Lawrence Weiner's exploration of New York's urban terrain, *In direct line with another and the next* (2000). While the title suggests a grid structure, Weiner prints the text on 19 manhole covers scattered below Union Square, creating temporary public monuments of deliberately under-the-radar forms. The two projects are also linked by both artists' interest in revolutionary city planner Robert Moses, whose interventions into the city's public spaces radically re-determined them.

Keegan's 9-minute video, *Biography Biographer*, features the artist's father, who as a teenager worked as a caddy at Moses's golf club and worked closely with several of Moses's associates. Riffing on the documentary form made popular by PBS, Keegan's video presents a portrait of his father and New York as told through the layered understanding of Robert Moses as a highly contested city planner and architect of New York as we know it.

Keegan's 2008 artist book, *AMERICAMERICA*, accumulates multiple, inter-generational voices in the art world, all seeking an answer to the question "How did we get here?" This show directs that same question to New York, while focusing on social history, architecture, photography and sculpture. *Circulation*, a crinkled aluminum wall relief, hangs above the gallery's entrance portal, and can only be read when approached from an angle.



Matt Keegan: I Apple NY

Posted on May 17, 2011

By [Nicholas Wells](#)

A collection of photographs, sculptures and printed texts, Matt Keegan's composite vision of New York City captures the gaudy and the gritty, the mundane and the maniacal, and the everyday moments that inundate us. Like everything else in the city, Keegan builds on what came before, inviting collaboration and openly riffing on influences. A fawning interview with Milton Glaser serves as the exhibition's press release, while Glaser's famous "I ♥ NY" logo is reworked here—in collaboration with David Reinfurt—with a bright red apple in place of the heart.

The backbone of the exhibition is a series of photographs depicting New York in public, wrapping around the gallery at eye level. Organized loosely in a geographical order, the photographs are mounted on sheet metal spray-painted in the colors of New York bridges, with names like "George Washington Bridge Grey" and "Pulaski Red." The images are the sort of thing that creeps into you subtly. Their power is in the repetition of seeming mundanity: a bird's-eye view of a busy street corner, those ubiquitous ConEd subway posters, and two women lounging on brownstone steps in the sun. Keegan's selection of images presents a vision of the social sphere of the city, but also prompts his audience to build their own narrative through connections.

The exhibition subtly explores various sides of conflict in New York's development: the different waves and counter-waves that make this a unique city. In the video "Biography / Biographer," for example, Keegan's father talks about working as a teenager at a golf club patronized by Robert Moses, while a number of the photographs depict the West Village, that jumble of mismatched streets once home to Jane Jacobs. Maybe this is the phenomenon by which, in a place as densely populated as New York, any change has a rippling effect and will be rebuilt and recast by future generations. Towards the end of the interview-turned-press release, Glaser reflects on how New York has changed since he first put "I ♥ NY" to paper: "There is less inexpensive housing for people on every level... But the vitality of the city, the energy of the city, and the ambition of the city really keep you alive."

