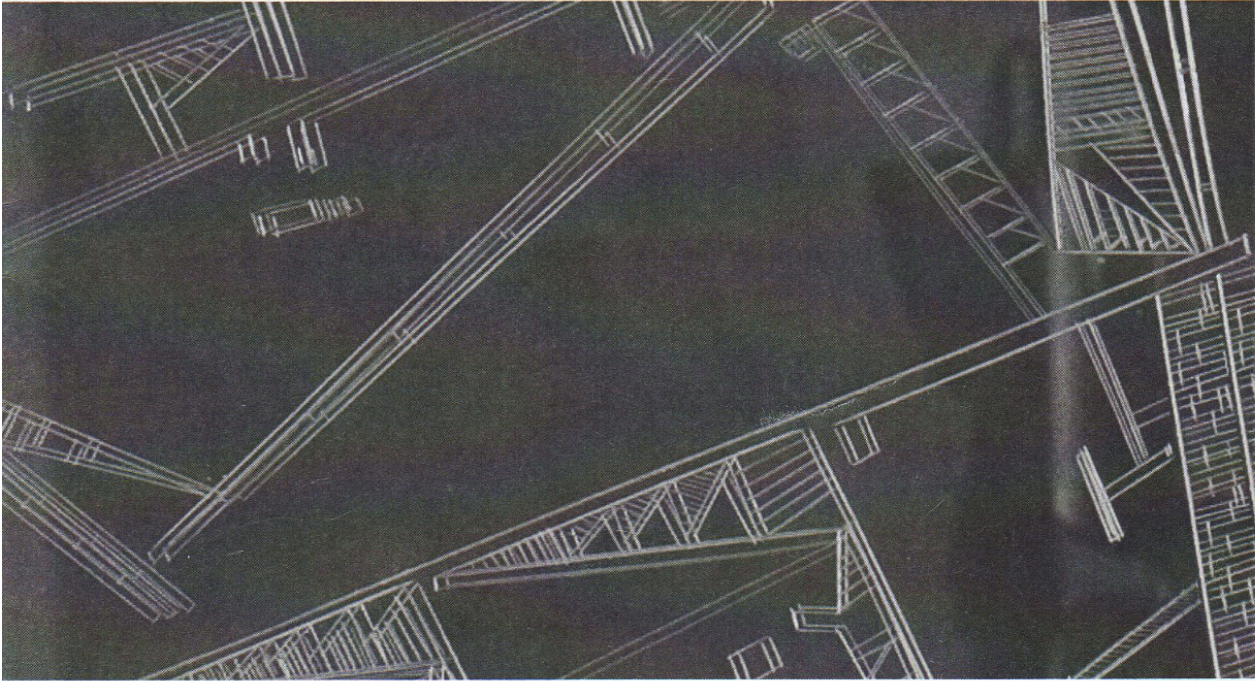


**From Huguenot to Microwave:
New and Recent Works by Marco Maggi**



February 12 – April 15, 2011

Alice and Horace Chandler Gallery and North Gallery

GALLERY GUIDE

NOTES ON THIS EXHIBITION

Marco Maggi's obsessively minimal yet coolly detailed artworks are studies in perception and materiality that reflect back, metaphorically and physically, on the viewer. Maggi's use of objects, techniques, and references evokes, but never makes explicit, the connections between culture, power, and the image that are the subject matter of much recent contemporary art.

The artist's works reveal the attention to detail, focus on process, and openness to chance developments and accidental outcomes that are so common (and so necessary) to printmaking. The focus on detail and process was Maggi's primary interest as a student and is a continued thread in his work to date. The artist's work is distinguished by visual and physical swapping of images, the employment of support materials as central components, and the leakage of imagery onto peripheral or subsidiary sections. These characteristics, coupled with an intensity of production that is too well organized to be obsessive but too extensive to be immediately graspable, are the hallmarks of an artist who has both submitted to and surmounted the rich technical and metaphorical landscape of the print medium.

A long series of stacks of paper cut with elaborately modest care divides one half of the gallery from the other, mimicking the operation of a printing press and, at one metaphorical remove, the production of art itself—and at another remove, that of artists themselves. An art museum at a BFA- and MFA-awarding university cannot help but comment upon the means of production of a commodity—art students—and this work expresses the tensions inherent in the relationship between museum and studio spaces (and between the didactic and the educational modes those spaces oscillate between).

Time-lapse video collapses the life cycle of an apple—a humble New Paltz specimen (and visual simile for the town)—into a cosmically concise epigraph for life itself. The apple becomes origin of temptation, the temptation of originality, and the source and inspiration of sin and beauty both—"oh apple of my eye," a poet might have declaimed, fumbling for the pause button we never press quite at the right time.

A surveillance mirror is decorated with—and its ostensible users' gazes are disrupted by—skeins of tiny lines. Here, the viewer is an unwitting link between a shape/image that distortedly contains 1) the museum displaying itself as a possibly paranoid and/or pathetically pointless panopticon, 2) a Google Maps-worthy cluster of cuts and clearings connoting a conurbation of mega-metropolitan complexity, and, 3) visuality itself. It is not so simple to “just look,” this work quietly insists.

Eyeglass lenses are augmented with—and compromised, functionally, by—angularly organic webs of spidery cuts. The lenses, worn by the artist during his time in New Paltz as a graduate student (from “Huguenot” [his address in the village] to “Microwave” [his first New York show]) filtered *every single thing he saw and made* during that formative period. They are as precious as—and they and their reflections and shadows stand, modestly, in for—vision itself. Here is a self-portrait of the artist in a reflective mood; an experiment—by the researcher, upon himself—in transparency and the limits of legibility.

And the ridiculously beautiful works of burnished, cut, and drawn-upon foil, paper, Plexiglas, and clayboard. The aluminum foil panel, so carefully burnished and so delicately limned, is Malevich-like in its geometric/totemic, aluminum-fuselaged aerial perspective. Some drawings are slumping or stalking or sneaking off of their proper surfaces onto mats and glazing and supports, muddling hierarchies of value and making people bend, straighten, peer, and—how presumptuous—work for their visual reward. Or they are calmly and quietly offering their daringly archaic, even, dare I write it, “primitive” (a term that’s probably the third rail of Latin American post-conceptualism) affect of delicate firm lines cut into matte-finish off-white clay tablets.

Maggi’s approach to artmaking is suffused with self-awareness and knowledge of international developments—he has modern and contemporary Latin American and North American and European and Asian and African art *down*. But these cultural raw materials are only very gently and very indirectly revealed in individual works. There

are no direct references to Uruguay's topography or artistic heritage or political history—or to New Paltz's (except, maybe, for the apples). However, the topsy-turvy visual strategies, the inside-out deployment of forms, and the recurring use of reflective materials all hearken to the askew position occupied by any artist from Latin America who doesn't completely surrender his or her identity.

Words—mine, anyway—cannot operate at the massively parallel speed of Maggi's works, which zoom in from conceptual/art-historical head-fakes at modernism's various above- and below-the-equator manifestations and outcomes to expose deftly assimilated but instantly legible references to artists as wide-ranging as Fred Sandback and Lucio Fontana, Zul Solar and Sol LeWitt, and Sarah Sze and John Baldessari, or even Mark Tobey and Carlos Cruz-Díez. I do not understand this exhibition, but I do know that I am privileged—and thrilled—to be this close to such an intelligent dissection and sensitively hesitant reassembly of the world. This exhibition reveals how one man—and, maybe, the rest of us—can address a world in which former Uruguayan dictators reappear thirty years later, while art markets reinflate, while technology exacerbates the gaps between people, while buds swell in an ever-warming world, and while skill, we are told, supplants care.

Brian Wallace
Curator