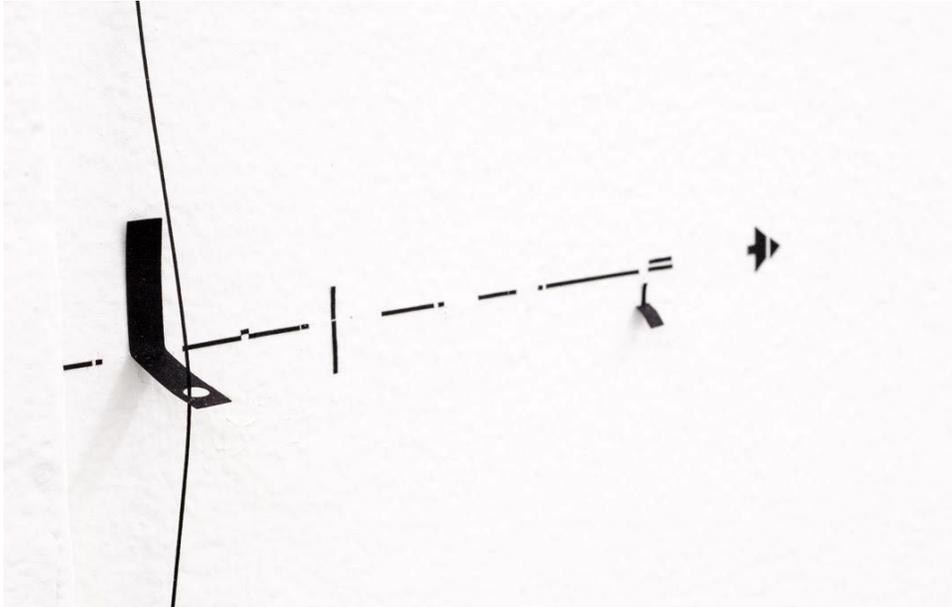


The Self-Adhesive Intricacies of Marco Maggi – with the Lights Off 09.17.19 Posted by David Behringer



Marco Maggi. INITIALISM installation at Josée Bienvenu Gallery. NYC 2019 (detail)

New York-based artist Marco Maggi cuts and arranges thousands of tiny pieces of self-adhesive paper. These complex collages are often contained in traditional frames behind protective glass – but this month, his work can be viewed directly affixed to the gallery walls in a walk-through exhibition of chance discovery. The exhibition titled “Initialism (from Obscurantism to Enlightenment)” is on view at the Josée Bienvenu Gallery in New York through November 16th, and contains both the incredibly complex framed works, and a full-room installation. The only catch is: The lights are off.



Waiting to Surface (Capital A), 2018 (detail)

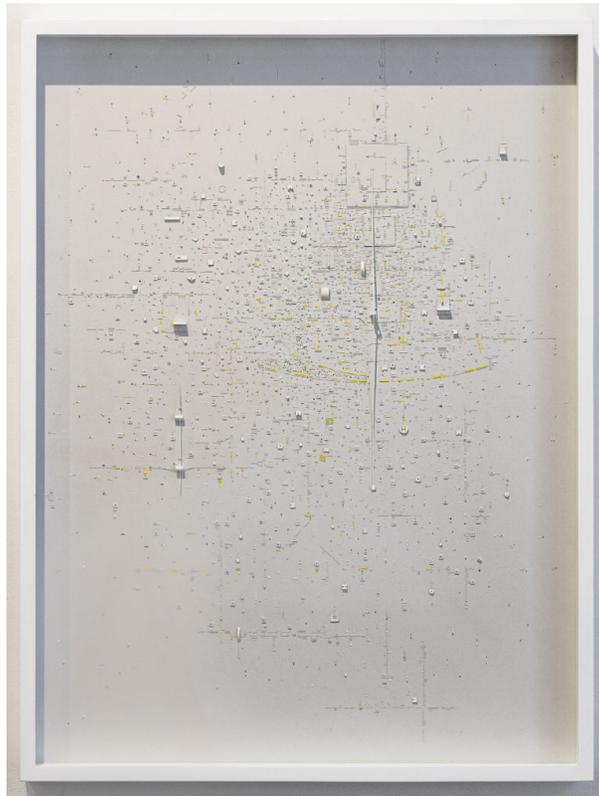


Waiting to Surface (Lowercase a), 2019



Waiting to Surface (Lowercase a), 2019 (detail)

Before describing the dark room, there is a beautifully sunlit room in the back of the gallery that contains the framed works. These mostly white collages offer surprises at every square inch. And it's important to describe just how impossibly tiny the pieces are within these works. As an example – many artworks appear to include tiny black or blue dots made with a fine-tipped pen – but these TOO are cut pieces of colored paper.



Waiting to Surface (U), 2019

Marco uses self-adhesive paper – a material that eliminates the mess, bulk, and additional step of using glue. It also allows for a “backwards” method of collage when positioning the smallest pieces. For this, he can apply a larger sticker first, cut a tiny piece, and remove the excess.



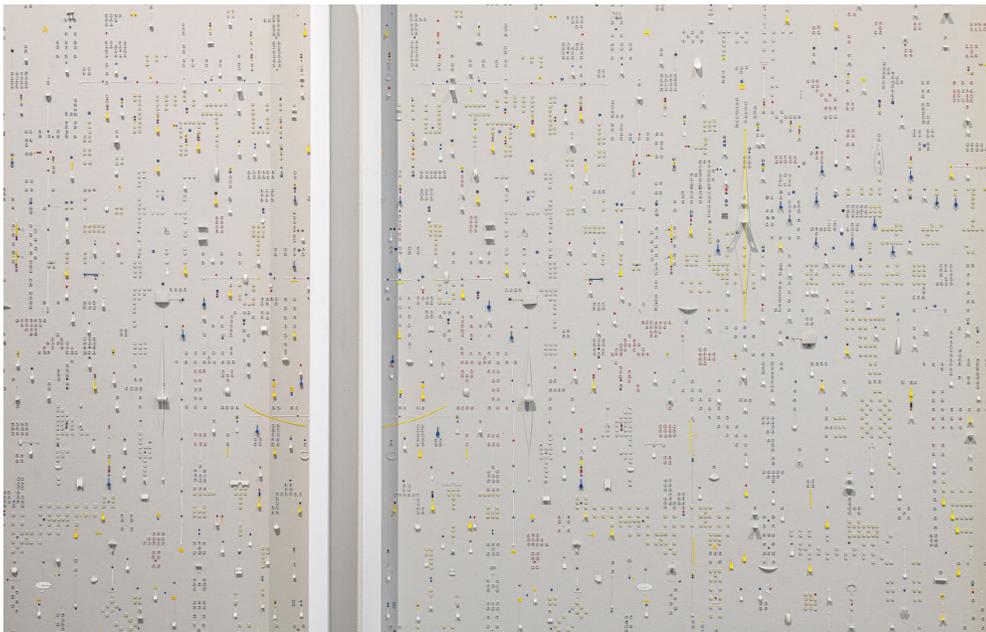
Waiting to Surface (U), 2019 (detail)



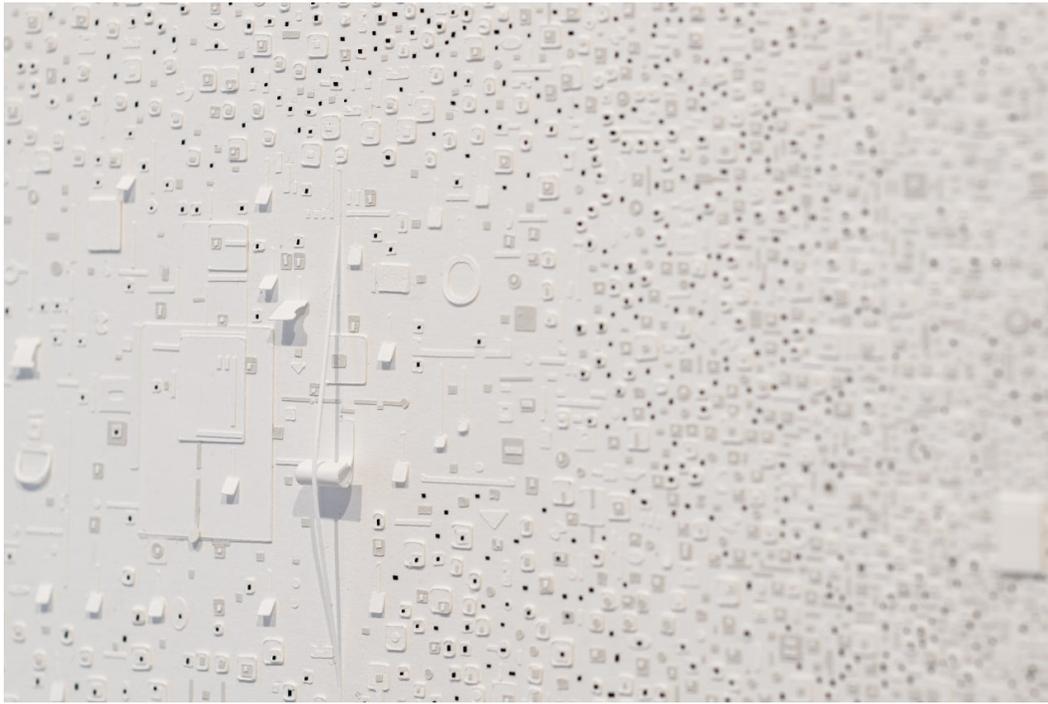
Waiting to Surface (E), 2019

I've always imagined Marco's work to be areal views of alien cities. Marco however, equates everything he does with written language. Though the works are abstract (there is no way to "read" them that I've deciphered) – the titles hint at his obsession with text and the alphabet: "Waiting to Surface (Capital A)" is near the smaller "Waiting to Surface (Lowercase a)".

In "Palindromo" (pictured below), 2 framed compositions are exact but reversed copies of each other – and rather than title them "mirror images", or "Rorschach", he chose to title them by the Spanish word for "Palindrome" – the name for a word that reads the same backward as forward.



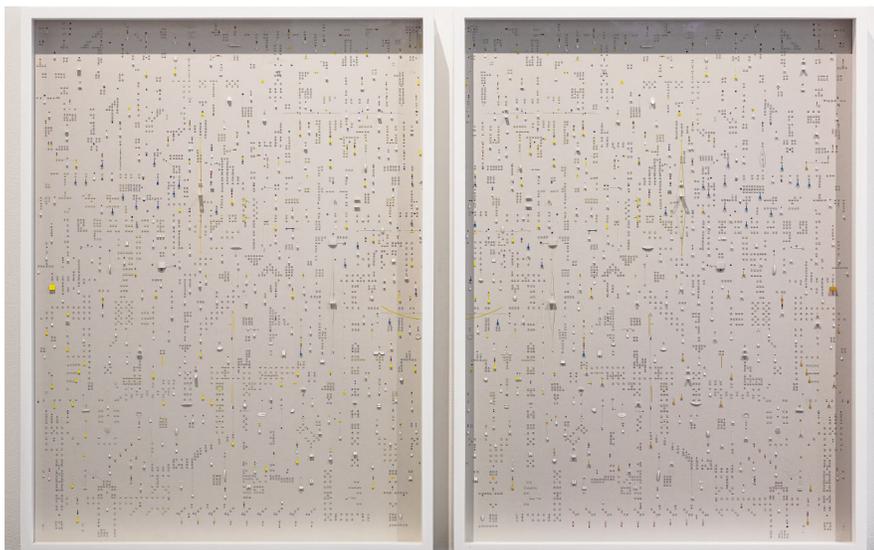
Palindromo, 2019 (detail)



Waiting to Surface (E), 2019 (detail)

A quote from the artist in the press release reveals his concern and curiosity about the continued abbreviation of our writing, and what the future may hold:

“Words lose letters every day: abbreviations, acronyms, leet-speak shorthand, truncation: all strategies to save time and occult meaning, simplifying communication in order to be more and more obscure... In a few years, abstract drawing might replace initialism to become the preferred language of the media and social networks”. – Marco Maggi, 2019

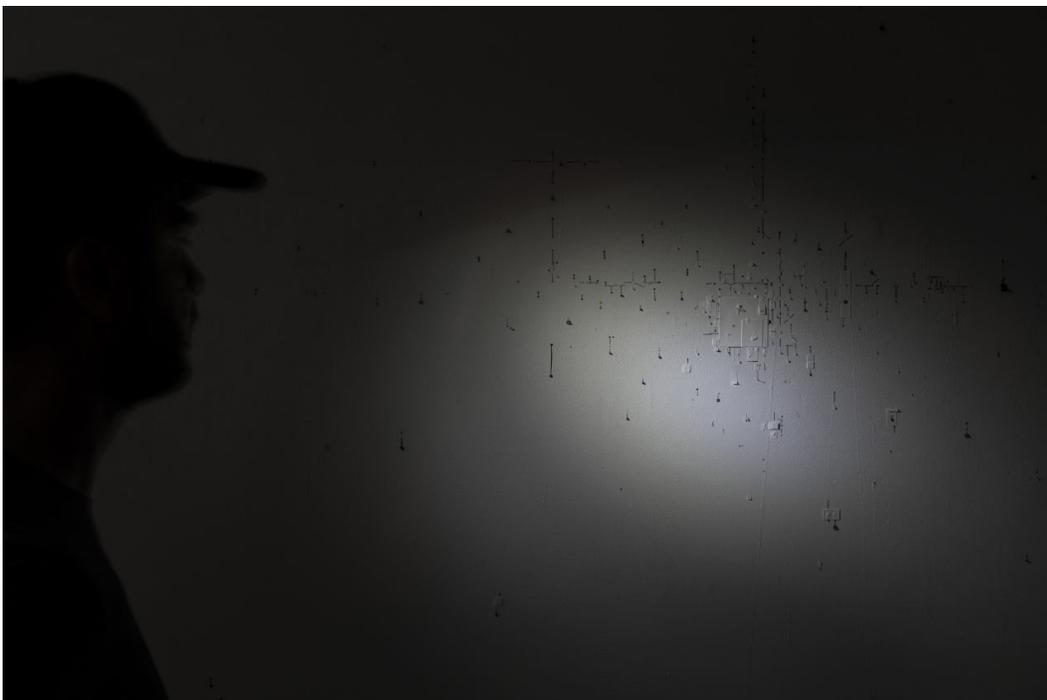


Palindromo, 2019



Palindromo, 2019 (detail)

For this 9th solo show at Josee Bienvenu Gallery, most visitors will assume they have made a mistake upon entering the gallery (I did). The lights are turned off and the gallery appears completely empty. But within 3-4 seconds of standing there baffled, a friendly gallery director will jump up from their desk in the back with a friendly greeting and the gift of a baseball hat outfitted with an LED light on its brim. When wearing the cap, you illuminate a personal spotlight in any direction you look – like a cave explorer finding thousands of fragile and tiny paper sticker arrangements adhered directly to the walls.

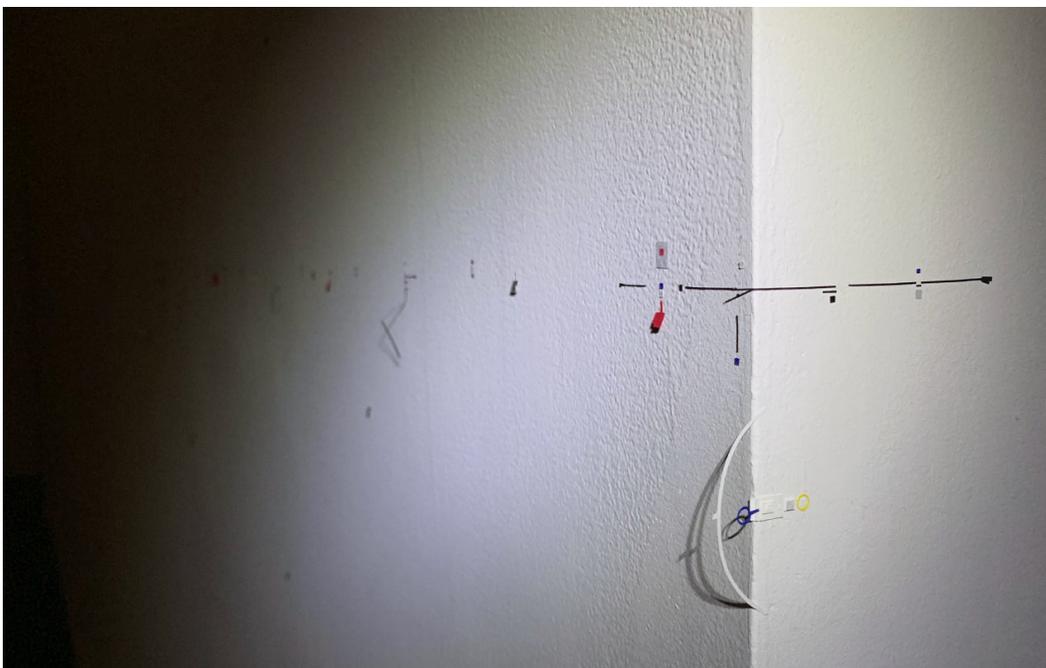


Marco Maggi, INITIALISM Installation at Josée Bienvenu Gallery, NYC 2019

The majority of work is at eye level and often includes a reflective material that glows bright when your headlight catches it. It's worth exploring other dark corners to find additional discovers, like a stack of notebooks titled "Stacking Quote", or an arrangement of reflective paper on the floor that looks like a city at night when viewed from a plane.



Marco Maggi, INITIALISM Installation at Josée Bienvenu Gallery, NYC 2019



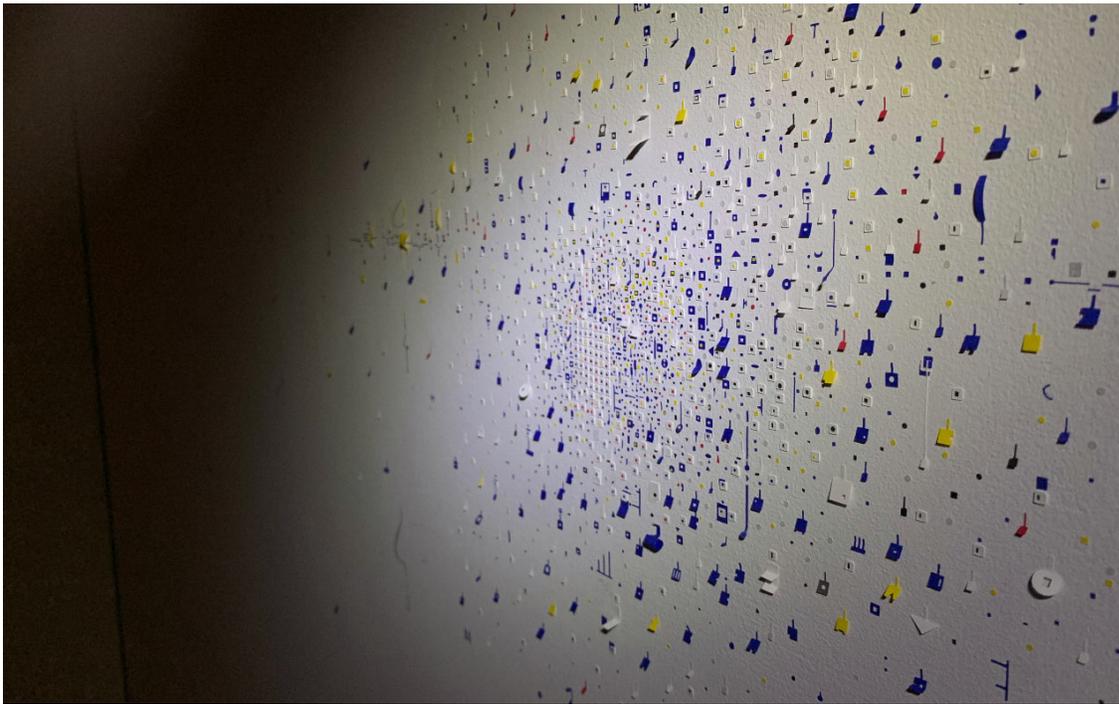
Marco Maggi, INITIALISM Installation at Josée Bienvenu Gallery, NYC 2019



Marco Maggi, INITIALISM Installation at Josée Bienvenu Gallery, NYC 2019



Stacking Quote, 2019



Marco Maggi, INITIALISM Installation at Josée Bienvenu Gallery, NYC 2019

Whether tiny and framed or discovered in the dark, the installation is best viewed in person. Visit the gallery Tuesday through Saturday until November 16th. The lights are off, but I promise they're open.

What: Marco Maggi "Initialism (from Obscurantism to Enlightenment):

Where: Josee Bienvenu Gallery, 529 W 20th St, 1st Floor, New York City

When: September 12 – November 16, 2019

Photography by Ugo Carmeni, Ugo Carmeni Studio, courtesy Josee Bienvenu Gallery New York

(photos in the dark have been supplemented with a few personal iPhone photos taken by the author)