

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Matt Keegan

Lengua

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David Berezin: How should we start this?

Matt Keegan: I think the best way to preface it is that I recently went to your studio and it was clear that there's an affinity between our work, even though the work is quite different. We both have an interest in language, specifically familiar phrases. For Altman Siegel, I selected phrases that are relevant to my mother's ESL flash cards. It seems like you are working from a foundation of references that are filtered through television and contemporary popular cinema.

Right. You know it's funny when I write about my work I often include the phrase: stock imagery and stock cultural practices. I think your attitude about language is rubbing up against the idea of the stock, in a way...it somehow uses the idea of stock communication.

Well, I'm very interested in the vernacular of stock photography and I think it is relevant to both of our work, specifically because it is something that is supposed to be an empty vessel, which is obviously an impossibility... There is a bank of images that could be activated by a spectrum of text and advertorial copy that could promote a vast number of products... Within your work, you use familiar tropes that play with the expectation of title sequences and credits. Working within genres that are so familiar, a viewer can immediately access the type of TV show or film that you're referencing, just by watching your fabricated intro or listening to your curated closing music.

Do you think that the same can be said for your text pieces? Do you think your text pieces of simple phrases trigger a commonly understood experience or attitude? How much do you care about the specific in choosing those phrases?

They're specific in how vague they are. For example, some of the phrases that will be in the show are "it goes without saying" or "he said she said" or "it's not you, it's me"... These are belabored phrases and the later are indicative of a kind of impasse where subjectivity is immediately addressed but to no clear end. They're not pointing to something conclusive; it's already posited as one perspective vs. another. There may be something relevant to your work with language that implies motion-- in the case of "it goes without saying" or "it's not you it's me" it's almost like an endless loop, like your videos. They're not finite, nor specific...

But it uses the generic and it uses the fact that you can describe it without having seen it, or if you hear a description without having seen it, you can understand. If one imagines the title sequence from a cop show with this text on it, and the variety of ways you can make that... I guess there are specifics to how I did it, but my goal was to create a believable title, to create my own stock or stand-in.

Right, and I also feel with my mother's flash cards, there's over 400 double-sided cards, so almost 800 images that she assembled over the course of an approximately 15 year period, and so many of them are taken from newspapers, magazines, and retail

catalogs. They're very anchored in a middle class aesthetic and they immediately point to a particular time period that is also relevant to your video work. Funnily enough, both are very 90's or specific to the image and audio or music and image of that time period in America... When we had our studio visit you asked if your work was very West Coast, but I think that larger than that representation, our work is very American and its reading is linked to a particular cultural reference, but also a slang, a shorthand of sorts... For this particular work with my mother's ESL images, it is relevant to a type of acculturated reading and the idea of not only teaching, but that the system of language-learning is imbedded within an image system that speaks to American consumerism, a particular class standing, and the implications of all that is imbedded in this system.

The language or the vocabulary necessary to the work is not always an art historical vocabulary, but also an American Pop vocabulary as well.

...In your work, the idea of remembering a show as filtered through a song, or as filtered through an intro. How hearing a particular song, or a [theme] song that is akin to *Full House* or something, how evocative that is. I feel that in both of our work there is an interest in how little you can provide in order to have a trigger that creates that type of evocative response. And that to me is really interesting to consider: how much can one image trigger, how much can one phrase trigger, how much can one verse of a song trigger?

A crossover in both our work is the assembling of different objects. In my case collaging stock photographs to create a new composition. In your case putting together these pieces of ephemera or photographs that can create a place, creating recognition in the combination... I feel like you are creating either a narrative or a place by assembling these images, which goes back to our mutual interest in legibility, or how we let the viewer put it together.

Yeah, and also making the viewer complete the cycle... I feel like if you give the viewer these parts but it is up to them to assemble them as they see fit or as they understand... that can be generous because if you give the viewer the full puzzle then they just stare at the puzzle, but if you give them the pieces and request that they assemble them, then I think there is a more dynamic relationship.

Right, and there is always space in-between pieces or missing pieces where they can make their own connections.

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Read the complete interview at altmansiegel.com.

A new artist book will accompany this exhibition: [Images are words/Las imagenes son palabras](#), which is for sale at the gallery.

See David Berezin's work on the Project Space at

<http://www.altmansiegel.com/>

or

<http://www.ughhh.org/>

For more information please contact the gallery at info@altmansiegel.com or 415-576-9300