

Flash Art

Matt Keegan

by Alexander Ferrando

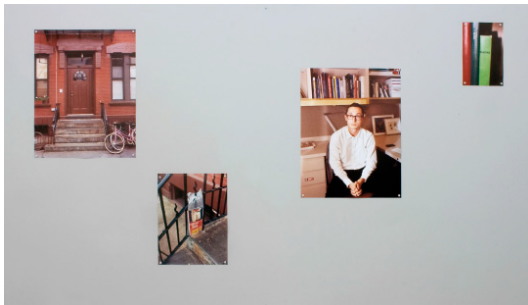
Flash Art 279 July-September 2011

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.



MATT KEEGAN, "I Apple NY," 2011. Installation view at D'Amelio Terras, New York. Courtesy D'Amelio Terras, New York.



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.

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.