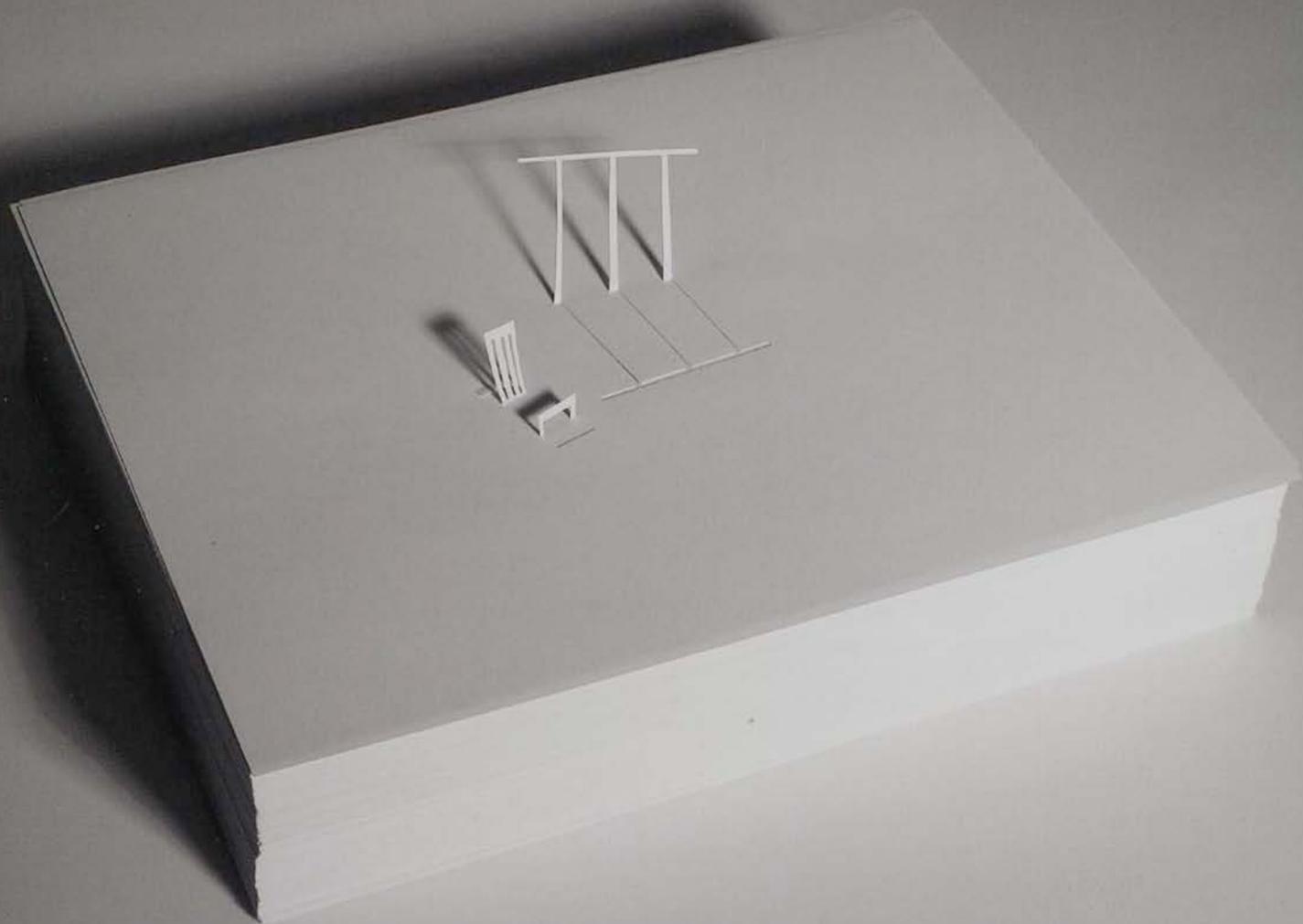


marco maggi



AMERICAN REAM
THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY

17 SEPTEMBER—7 NOVEMBER 2009

SLOW SCANDAL
THE POINT OF CONTACT GALLERY

OPENING RECEPTIONS AT BOTH VENUES 17 SEPTEMBER 5-8 P.M.
GUIDE #9

READING WITH NO HOPE OF BEING INFORMED¹ ANJA CHÁVEZ, THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY

We are setting up a society of dysfunctional information: reality becomes illegible and the visual arts become invisible. My drawings resemble writing in a language I cannot read.

Marco Maggi, 2007²

Uruguayan-born, New Paltz based artist Marco Maggi is best known for his use of everyday material such as Plexiglas, acrylic, aluminum foil, paper, and clayboard, on which he inscribes a vocabulary that evokes Aztec culture and early twentieth-century Russian Constructivism. Maggi's focus on the repetitive inscription of obscure symbols recalls ancient cultures, but also his fascination with a long tradition of encrypted languages as can be found in Man Ray's 1920 photograph *Dust Breeding* that revokes Land artists' fascination with past cultures (Robert Smithson's earthwork *Spiral Jetty*, 1970). As in all of these works, Marco Maggi emphasizes a certain historical continuity while projecting something new.

Maggi's work also manifests his interest in mapping, geology, anthropology, and language in a way that communicates with tendencies, beginning in the 1970s, toward reworking and often fading the dividing lines between such media as drawing, painting, and sculpture. Maggi's visual language is the result of a carefully elaborated system where, to quote the artist, drawing "resembles writing", but the resemblance remains problematic since his visual grammar also works to generate incomprehensible codes. Maggi's work thus also mirrors the information overload in today's society and reformulates what he calls a "vacuum of information". Consciously or not, when Maggi states in the above quote "My drawings resemble writing in a language I cannot read", he refers to the modern concept that a drawing reflects thought process and remains a poetic revelation of the artist's inner life.³ Maggi often has noted that his work is only about the temporal and spatial process of drawing, a notion that refers back to Paul Klee's pre-Surrealist word pictures, Joaquín Torres-García's attempts to create a universal language in the 1930s (*Constructive Universalism*), and Henri Michaux's automatic writing in the 1940s. Marco Maggi's intentions however are quite different, since he believes that through his work there is "no hope of being informed". Rather, even as the ambiguous language Maggi inscribes into his works forces the viewer to experience them on many levels, they reiterate the drawing's ability (in the twenty-first century as before) to have us reflect on the time and space of the work's own creation.

American Ream and *Slow Scandal* are the result of a partnership between The Warehouse Gallery and The Point of Contact Gallery at Syracuse University, and feature media that the artist chose as a means of responding to both spaces in his third solo museum exhibition in the United States.

American Ream features the installation *HOTBED (ORANGE)*, the video *D-REAM*, and the drawing *PLEXI LINE*. The work *HOTBED (ORANGE)* is part of the *HOTBED* series that Marco Maggi developed for The Warehouse Gallery. Reams of paper cover the floor to form the shape of an octagon. The artist used 125,000 sheets of paper to establish a broken grid. Using a razorblade, he also created tiny paper sculptures as a revision of Henri Matisse's paper cut-outs, and he proposed to install a few reams on the beams in the gallery's space upon his first visit to the gallery in May 2009. The work's octagonal shape mirrors The Warehouse Gallery's octagonal columns while each of the top sheets project mini-sculptures that address alternative architectures (buildings or cities). The subtitle *ORANGE* may be a reference to Syracuse University and the work could be understood as a projection, in miniature, of an architectural environment in a former warehouse that now belongs to SU. In addition, the artist's material consciousness corresponds (at times when we are reminded to 'go green') to twenty-first century strategies since ninety-five percent of this installation, the reams themselves, will be reusable after the exhibition closes.

Adjacent to the main gallery, in the vault, is *D-REAM*, a collaborative video by Marco Maggi and Ken Solomon. According to Solomon, both artists were interested in "the visual effects of time" and "the shadow [of the sculpture] ... So I created, in my studio a rotating arm with a light on the end of it pointing towards Marco's cut-out that lie flat on the floor at the base of the arm ... Then Marco and I just had to determine how many frames per second to determine the running time of the piece ... *D-REAM* was born."⁴ The video thus reveals a miniature sculpture with its shadow in motion projecting a potentially monumental sculpture that equally evokes the installation in the main gallery.

The play of objects and their shadows is also the subject of *PLEXI LINE* in the main gallery. The artist used the gallery's spotlights to create the drawing's outline on the walls. Thus, there are the lines engraved into the plexi and those projected onto the walls (as the drawing's shadow). Maggi's fascination with written and visual languages is also evident in the double meaning of all of his titles. For instance, *American Ream* refers to a ream of paper but also to *the American Dream*, which is also a humorous comment on the artist's own Latin American origins. But his works are, above all, about drawing—drawing as sculpture, architecture, and a process that informs reality as much as it is informed by reality.

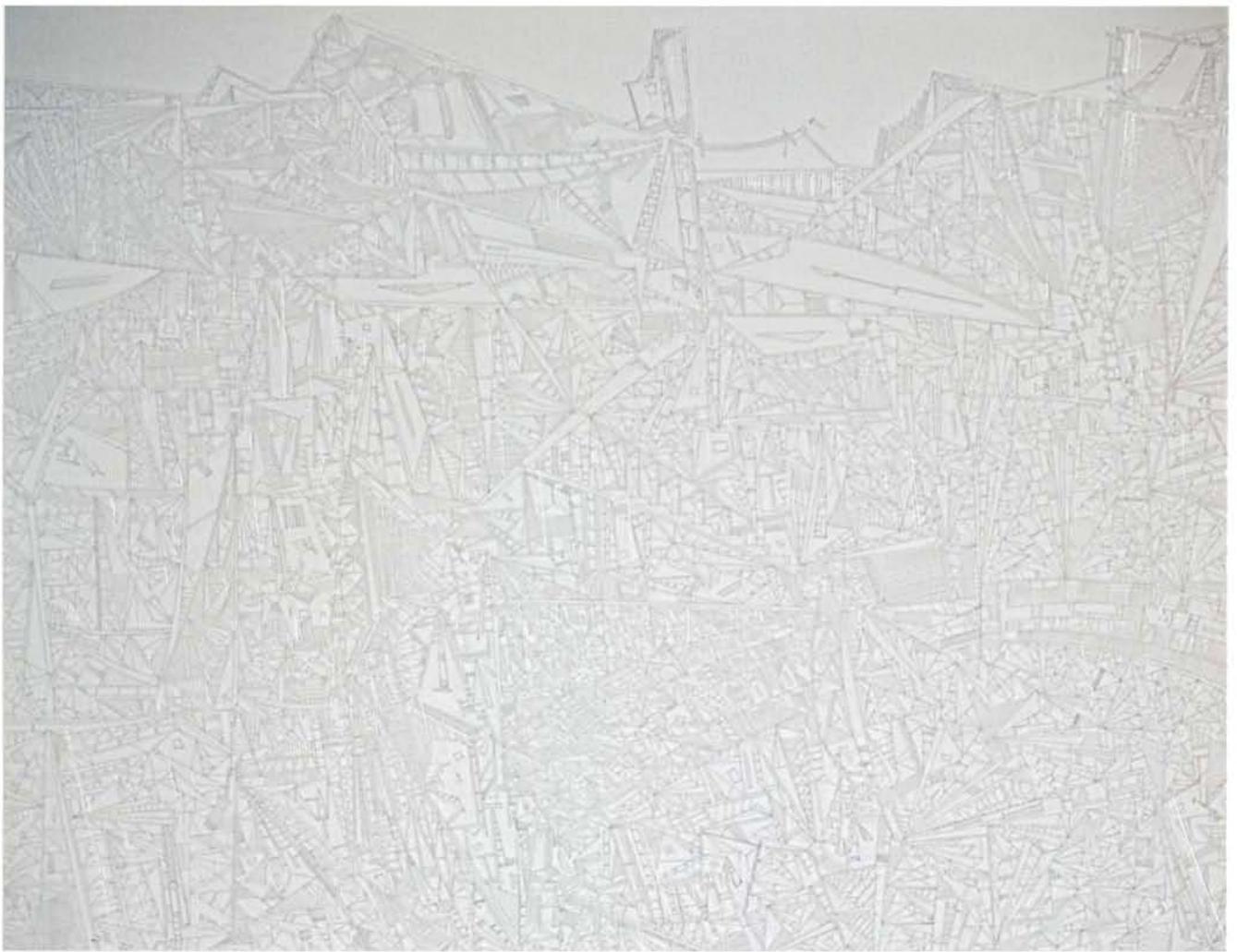
NOTES

¹ Marco Maggi, conversation with the author and Pedro Cuperman (May 19, 2009). Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from this conversation.

² Quoted after Sheila Yoshpe, "A Slow Walk with Marco Maggi. A Conversation with Sheila Yoshpe", in: *Rollmagazine* (October–November 2007), 45.

³ Michael Newman, "The Marks, Traces, and Gestures of Drawing", in Catherine de Zegher (Ed.), *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act. Selected from the Tate Collection* (New York: Tate Publishing and the Drawing Center, 2003), 103; see also Jean Fisher, "On Drawing", in: *ibidem*, 222.

⁴ Ken Solomon, correspondence with the author [July 11, 2009].



Detail: **PLEXI LINE**, 2009

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Notes: height precedes width

All artworks are by Marco Maggi unless noted otherwise

All artworks have been made available courtesy of the artist and Josée Bienvenu Gallery

AMERICAN REAM The Warehouse Gallery

D-REAM, 2006
Marco Maggi and Ken Solomon
Video
3:01 min.

HOTBED (Orange), 2009
Cuts on 125,000 white pages
Installation: variable dimensions

PLEXI LINE, 2009
Cuts on plexi / shadow on paper
16 x 40 inches

SLOW SCANDAL The Point of Contact Gallery

BRAILLE WALL (36 Blind Slides), 2009
36 engravings on aluminum foil
36 slide mount stacks
One Blind Slide: 2 x 2 x 2 inches
Installation: variable dimensions

DROPP, 2009
Cuts on 4 x 4 x 4 inches plexi cube
Drawing on 6 faces

EMPIRE RULERS, 2009
Engraving on 11 Empire rulers
24 x 24 inches

GRAPH, 2009
Graphite on graphite
20 x 16 inches

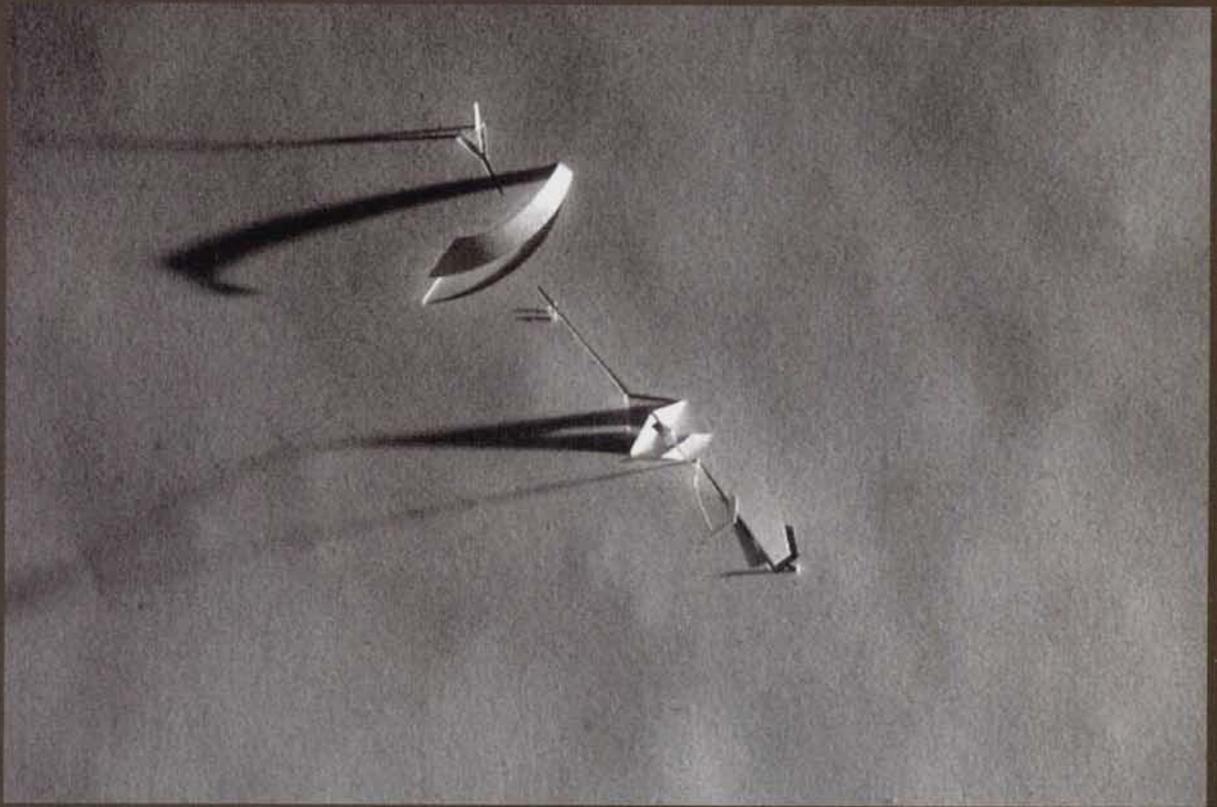
HORIZONTAL SHADOW, 2009
Cuts on 8.5 x 11 inches plexi sheet

INCOMPLETE COVERAGE ON DUCHAMP, 2009
Cuts on 500 pages
9 x 11.5 x 2 inches

KODAK SQUARE, 2009
80 aluminum slides in Kodak Carousel

PRECOLUMBIAN & POSTCLINTONIAN, 2009
Engraving on Reynolds aluminum foil roll
2 x 2 x 12 inches

SAINT ANDREAS FAULT, 2009
Pencil on mat
20 x 16 inches



D-REAM, 2006



PRECOLUMBIAN & POSTCLINTONIAN, 2009

SLOW SCANDAL

PEDRO CUPERMAN, THE POINT OF CONTACT GALLERY

He uses visual signs, as if he were an old scribe. Marco Maggi draws on glass, on paper, on graphite, on foil—on any imaginable material—simple but rather mysterious texts, traces that seem snatches of some distant imaginary world. To say what?

More than saying, probing: depicting art as a visual way of reasoning, an equal mix of doubt and joy.

Still, words are all over the place. Usually titles are borders, verbal frames that define what belongs to the inside or the outside of a work. In semiotics parlance, they could be considered part of a unified text, since they work in sequence, following a linear ordering. In Marco Maggi the key, as in Shakespeare, is art spilling over. Titles, labels, and even commentaries grow above and below the frame in elliptic riddles. Verbal acts, sort of performances, looking for the signs of a portent.

SLOW SCANDAL, the title he chose for The Point of Contact Gallery segment of his show at Syracuse University, condenses the topics of this search: irony and meticulous reasoning; irreverence and hope. His titles and labels as well as his visual work are intertwined. As if in a world without enigmas, one is forced to question every received aesthetic and philosophical idea. But this is not speculative thinking. Inscriptions on graphite, as we see in *FLAT PENCIL*, are uttering ...what? Nothing; a nothing from which we could derive a quasi sensual enjoyment. One could call those signs tactile allurements. Touch me!

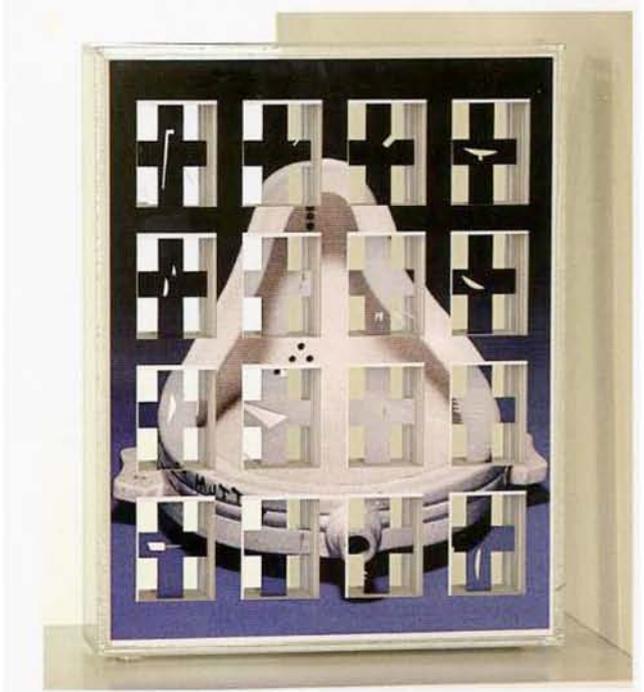
Some examples: In *PRECOLUMBIAN & POSTCLINTONIAN*, we come across an engraving on a roll of Reynolds aluminum foil which gives it a Pop Art splendor that could easily be taken as an example of post-modernist self-contempt for originality, except that this one, although charged with the irony that flows from the title, has no intention of fading into a ready-made theoretical metaphor. Of course, it is not just Reynolds foil paper; it is Reynolds recycled, or better, resurrected from the timeless world of the standardized object, manufactured as *artifact*. As is the case with all ready-mades, the choice had to be either a casual encounter or a calculated one; but in both cases, it becomes an intrusion of the artist's subjectivity into the impersonal atmosphere of the manufactured object. Or perhaps, it is just an artistic bypass, clearing away the differences between casual and calculated. Let's face it; manufactured objects were always ready to extend artists a helping hand.

KODAK SQUARE... If there are some ongoing "themes" in this piece, I should like to mention at least one: the drawing of a manufactured object whose intended function has been intervened. The original purpose, to show a positive photographic image on transparent material, has been altered. "You have access to 50% of the image," says

the label. But this, more than a troubled way of seeing, is turning a visual image into a philosophical argument about seeing. Halfway between *esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived), one of idealism's most cherished arguments, we recall one of Lewis Carroll's most hunting ironies. "I see nobody on the road," said Alice. "I only wish I had such eyes," the King remarked in a fretful tone. "To be able to see nobody. And at that distance, too!" (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*)

In *CUBIC DROPP*, vision and tact are joined. You can trace with your fingers inscriptions of an enigmatic character, tactile textures, trans-textures, *ready-to-hand entities*, to use a famous Heidegger phrase, seemingly setting an interactive field on a three-dimensional cubic Plexiglas. Space is translucent, concrete poetry, and you must learn how to read *between the sides*.

The works of Marco Maggi explore the gap between the artist and his audience. And in this gap, I think, lies the Reynolds aluminum foil with its engravings, the Plexiglas cube with its inscriptions and six dimensions, his famous Macintosh apples... what Lawrence Alloway once called "objects already known to both the author and his audience." All of Maggi's interventions open a sort of question mark, an inconclusive way of delaying the business of meaning. I see in Maggi the patience of a medieval artist-monk, and also, I should like to add, the rigorous humor one finds in some of Latin America's poets, especially the Argentine Macedonio Fernández. Through any of his objects one comes across a blurred sort of semiosis where all what is left standing is an artist's skepticism about the communicative exchange, the need to doubt, humorously. For beyond doubt lies the indescribable, silence perhaps.



INCOMPLETE COVERAGE ON DUCHAMP, 2009

THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY

Syracuse University
350 West Fayette Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

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The Warehouse Gallery is an international contemporary art venue of the SUart Galleries at Syracuse University. The gallery's mission is to present exhibitions and programs by artists whose work engages the community in a dialogue regarding the role the arts can play in illuminating critical issues of our life and times.

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Uruguayan-born, New Paltz-based Marco Maggi is best known for his use of everyday materials on which he inscribes a vocabulary that evokes Aztec culture and the art of Joaquín Torres-García. By focusing on visual codes (such as repeated visual symbols that only suggest objects), spatiality, and the political connotations of maps, Maggi's work also reflects Latin American traditions and concerns expressed by many contemporary artists. *American Ream* and *Slow Scandal* are the result of a partnership between both organizations and feature media that the artist chose as a means of responding to both spaces.

Cover: *HOTBED (ORANGE)*, 2009

