

## After the Fast: Marco Maggi Offers a Feast of Bauhaus-like Emojis at Josée Bienvenu Gallery

by Robin Scher



Marco Maggi, *Language in Residence*, 2016, cut paper on ping-pong ball and metal on shelf, 2¼ x 2 inches.

How do you appreciate a body of work designated as “a semiotic fast in order to rest from the indigestion we are subjected to on a daily basis?” This is the invitation Marco Maggi gives viewers to his show “Language in Residence” at Chelsea’s Josée Bienvenu Gallery. In lieu of interpretation then, they must rely on raw perception.

At first glance the work achieves what it sets out to do by offering up a set of apparently stark, flat surfaces. However, closer inspection reveals minuscule details. Working primarily with cut paper, Maggi meticulously crafts tiny geometrical forms that could variously be taken to resemble the cryptic cartography of an alien civilization carved into a piece of Plexiglas (*Paperweight*, all works 2016), a circuit board (*Constructing & Demolishing*), an arcane set of blueprints (*Demolishing & Constructing*), a collection of Bauhaus-esque emojis (*Small Hours*), and, in the case of several embossed ping-pong balls, a fleet of multi-colored Death Stars (*Newton*).

Maggi describes the principle that guides his curious creations as a “fold.” A fold here is defined as a “portion of data” (a set of shapes? a mathematical ratio?) that Maggi bends and transforms in various ways. With each exhibition of the work—this is the second show in a trilogy—Maggi adds another fold, creating an ever more detailed and seemingly complex code. In this way, the work organically evolves language-like into something that seems deeply imbued with significance. Only, instead of meaning, we have just the shapes and the simple fact of their tactile thingness.



Marco Maggi, *Traffic Lights (Yellow)*, detail, 2016, yellow self-adhesive archival paper on museum mat, 20¾ x 17¾ inches.

“Drawing is similar to writing in a language that I cannot read,” Maggi says in a statement accompanying the exhibition. In that sense Maggi is more preoccupied with the impulse to create language than with the outcome of its intended creation. As someone who proclaims not to believe in messages or ideas because, Maggi maintains, the latter have “the tendency to become fixed and aspire ultimately to the status of ideology,” it makes sense then that he would provide the following disclaimer to those entering his exhibition: “forego every hope of being informed.”

This is not to suggest that Maggi’s work is frivolous. Rather, for those willing to adopt the artist’s advice, the act of standing before his strange shapes is a deeply enriching experience.



Marco Maggi, *Landmark*, 2016, pencil on clayboard, 8 x 8 inches.

The development of language could be described as our mind’s means of making sense of reality. By foregoing the inevitable complications that come with fixing specific identities to characters and symbols, Maggi’s work gets to one of the more sublime experiences of our reality—the nature of time.