

ARTFORUM

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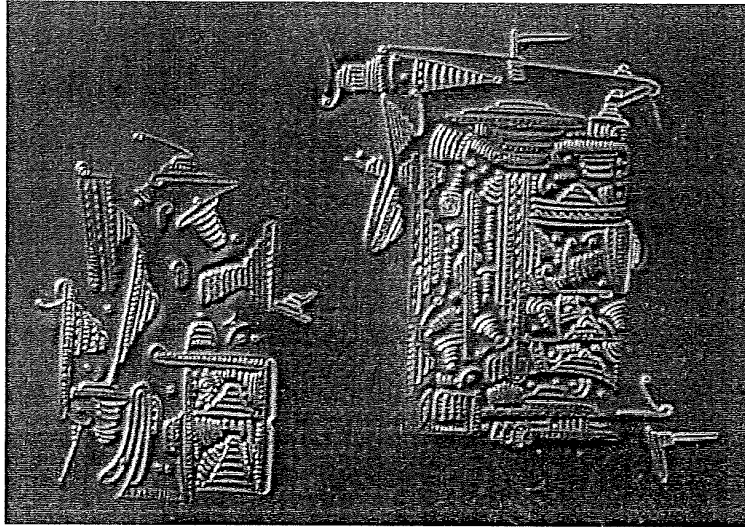
I N T E R N A T I O N A L

MARCO MAGGI 123 WATTS

Marco Maggi's works have a sense of ethereal expansiveness despite their modest-to-diminutive dimensions. Cryptic inscriptions run all over the Uruguayan artist's metal rulers, rectangles of Plexiglas, sheets of aluminum foil, and real Macintosh apples: conjoined cells of various shapes are filled in with straight lines, dashes, and curlicues; scattered shapes are Reminiscent of everything from sails and tents to sword handles and dense enclaves of buildings (in cross-section and bird's-eye views). The effusive script evokes ancient languages as well as aerial maps, bridging medieval cities and space-age circuit boards-or, as the title of one work puts it, "preColumbian and postClintonian." Maggi's technique for this text" is a form of drypoint etching that is paradoxically irreproducible-or when it is reproduced (say, in the shadows cast by lines in Plexiglas), it's immaterial. But despite the single-minded rigor of his undertaking, here it makes for surprisingly light, even playful work. The dry wit emanating from the forty pieces (all 2000) in the "Pencil Monologues," is often overt, as in the ongoing punning with apples organic and electronic (though Apple's Macintosh has ripened into the iMac).

Without close inspection, each piece yielded little on its own, but Maggi managed to turn the overall installation into a performance of sorts. The two framed drawings of Semioptics III extended shelf-like from the wall, while Stereo foil hung along one vertical edge (like an open door), showing off the positive and negative relief of Maggi's embossments. Elsewhere, sharpened leads for a mechanical pencil improbably balanced on end in a corner of the gallery and, in a separate work, atop a small piece of clay board. In another corner, easy to miss on the floor, two slide mounts opened out to form a tiny laptop, with pencil-on-foil drawings mounted in each window: art for the credit card slot in your wallet. Nail: Precarious Interactivity was more forceful, with seven framed works in a staggered pile beneath a large nail driven into the wall.

Hardware Versus Software-two apples, one shriveled with etched skin; the other apparently still firm, yet covered with incised foil-seemed to span the range of dichotomies and paradoxes in Maggi's work, embracing at once the highly manufactured, the laboriously hand-crafted, and the simply



Marco Maggi, *PreColumbian & PostClintonian* (detail), 2000
pencil on aluminum foil, 14 x 11".

organic. Here the sleek, industrial-age perfection of aluminum foil plays off apples carved like nineteenth-century curios, which mellow into golden brown and wine shades as they dry. Maggi poses questions about technology and biology in an era when human knowledge and experience and senses are overwhelmed by computer-ized information.

Then there's the artist's penchant for neat configurations in the works themselves, which acts as a counterpoint to his sprawling, almost viral language. Bit Sampler One and Bit Sampler Zero, vertical and horizontal arrangements of 216 plastic slide mounts each, produced subtly differing optical effects with these standardized "frames" for art, riffing on Op Art and Minimalism; Profiles consists of two-inch-deep cross-sections from 20,000-sheet piles of legal- and letter-size paper, framed and stacked to highlight the lines and shadows created by the papers' edges; and in 24 Empires, two dozen two-inch-wide metal rulers are arranged side-by-side to create a forty-eight-inch square.

Having soaked up a world addicted to speed and increasingly dependent on technology, Maggi formulates his commentary using highly crafted, extremely slow techniques. As he notes in the exhibition's accompanying catalogue, "Our time is so preoccupied with the spectacle of macro drama that delicacy ... has become subversive."

-Julie Caniglia