

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN VISUAL ART

visual art

Time is the essence of Matt Keegan's "Postcards & Calendars." It gives many forms to a native New Yorker's recent memories of life in San Francisco and explores the City's history, while also contemplating the death of newsprint and vanishing of non-digital keepsakes. EXHIBITION VIEWS FROM "POSTCARDS & CALENDARS" COURTESY OF ALTMAN SIEGEL GALLERY



Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday



Time passages

Matt Keegan gives from to his and SF's past in "Postcards & Calendars"

By Johnny Ray Huston
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The past is vanishing, more than ever before. Or so it seems, as so many temporal placeholders — including the newspaper you might be holding in your hands right now — give way to digital facsimiles. This quandary is a morphing source of inspiration for "Postcards & Calendars," a solo show by the New York artist and temporary San Francisco resident Matt Keegan, who is about to complete a teaching stint at California College of the Arts.

While Keegan engages a consistently time-based theme throughout "Postcards and Calendars," he does so via refreshingly varied forms and motifs. He's dedicatedly studious enough to turn a trip to the GLBT Historical Society into an semi-installation, yet easygoing enough to use sexual-

ly-charged archival pieces as material, spontaneous enough to try out something different with each piece in his overall show, subversive (or formally perverse) enough to digitally photograph newspapers, and irreverent enough to break his own rules regarding what constitutes a record of daily life.

Keegan first stung my eyes and queer spirit with a piece from the Altman Siegel Gallery's inaugural group show. It visually manifested the infinite recess of a ex-romantic relationship in a manner that interspersed teasing hints of still-extant attraction with a palpable sense of emotional loss. All of these aspects brought the "memory drawings" of San Francisco artist Colter Jacobsen to mind, so it's only fitting that Jacobsen contributes a booklet to "Postcards & Calendars" that plays off of Keegan's theme. In fact, one can draw further connections between Keegan, Jacobsen, and the NYC filmmaker Matt Wolf — three artists of roughly the same generation who share similar queer historical imperatives while allowing humor, traces of casual lust or

longing and even some lovelorn aspects into their art. Keegan's book *AMERICAMERICA* (Printed Matter, 140 pages, 2008), an exploration of national identity through the Reagan era's "Hands Across America" phenomenon, possesses enjoyable parallels to Wolf's films about the late David Wojnarowicz and Arthur Russell, and Jacobsen's arrangements of trinkets and trash into expressions that find meaning or power in degradability.

"Postcards & Calendars" is a direct array of works, often candid, and at times (in the case of the gay calendars from the 1970s) full-frontal. But the show's lingering strength comes from more elliptical gestures, such as a wall of personal imagery that Keegan has rendered more enigmatic and evocative through an unconventional series of drawing and photo processes. In fact, to tap into the depth of what Keegan does here, you need to look closely at the walls themselves, where you might discover 31 passages of time. **SFBG**

**MATT KEEGAN:
POSTCARDS & CALENDARS**
Through May 23
Altman Siegel Gallery
49 Geary, fourth floor, SF
(415) 576-9300
www.altmansiegel.com

NEW ART AND STYLE ON GEARY: LOCAL LOOKS AND VIEWS ABROAD

With a calm demeanor and a pulled-together, no-nonsense appearance, Claudia Altman-Siegel isn't an obvious suspect when it comes to identifying the driving force behind a conceptual art show that draws well-heeled European tourists and people clad in Converse shoes and skinny jeans. Both types, and more, are drawn to Matt Keegan's "Postcards & Calendars," where they're confronted by an eight-foot list of days of the week and a larger-than-life photograph of a *New York Times* reader hidden behind dismal headlines.

The four month-old Altman Siegel Gallery is set apart from neighboring galleries by its inclusion of a window, a trait that trades art hermeticism for the possibility of sunshine. Street noise is present but not disruptive — a reminder that another world exists beyond the space's light cocoon of images and ideas. It has a distinctively different aura from the other galleries in the 49 Geary St. building, something Altman-Siegel says she is "sort of blind to."

After 10 years of work in New York City, Altman-Siegel slipped over to San Francisco to fill a gap in the West Coast gallery scene, bringing emerging local and internationally established artists who are still early on the trajectory to significance in the art canon.

Local art or specificity is prominent in Altman-Siegel's curatorial work to date. The current show, though by a New York artist, includes sketches of familiar San Francisco street corners. Bay Area artist Trevor Paglen's surreal cosmic photographs were the focus of the gallery's first solo show.

Across the street, mannequins wearing teal trousers topped by black, multipocketed jackets and craftily reconstructed vintage dresses stand defiantly among an installation of birch tree branches and rusted machinery. A former STA travel office has been transformed into Shotwell, a cutting-edge update of a funky Aunt Edna boutique.

Newlyweds Michael and Holly Weaver needed somewhere to hawk their extensive collection of vintage clothes. When they landed a lease at 36 Geary St., the shop expanded to fuse groundbreaking European fashion and clothes by Bay Area designers. Denim from local menswear line B.Son is paired with chic shirts by Parisian collective Surface2Air. Shape-shifting square dresses from the San Francisco duo Please Dress Up! hang alongside bold separates by British label Scout. On the other side of Silverman Gallery's recent move to Sutter Street, the openings of Shotwell and Altman-Siegel suggest that something new and bold is creeping up on Union Square. **(Laura Peach)**

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Pixel Vision blog:
Interviews with
Matt Keegan and the
owners of Shotwell