

SculptureCenter, New York, Announces New Commission by Matt Keegan

April 21, 2019



Photo: Heidi Bohnenkamp (Courtesy: Artist)

SculptureCenter, New York, has announced a new commission through its Public Process education initiative by Matt Keegan for its fourth annual public artwork. The commission will be unveiled on May 12 and will be on view through August 18, 2019.

For his SculptureCenter commission, Matt Keegan integrates various ways of working including sculpture, photography, and video. Installed in Long Island City's Court Square Park, "what was & what is" distills real estate development's rhetorical and visual devices in an object that speaks the language of urban development while prompting opportunity for reflection on the fastest-growing neighborhood in New York City.

According to the official announcement, "what was & what is" is an 8-foot-tall rectangular perimeter, a nearly empty room of about 180 square feet, built on top of a preexisting but vacant concrete pad. One opportune foundation in a vast zone of development opportunity, the site positions the work at the feet of brand new residential buildings. Like its neighbors, Keegan's work is constructed mostly in transparent panes, a model home approaching 1:1 scale."

On three sides, the phrase "For a long time this neighborhood was about what will be, and now I think it's about what is," traces the upper edges of the sculpture. The quotation is pulled from a developer's comment in a 2017 New York Times article titled "Long Island City Grows Ever Skyward."

“Trimming the transparent box, which stands like a fragment of a high rise or a building raised to hold its own air rights, the phrase begs the question of whose timeline and whose sense of anticipation guides narratives of a neighborhood’s arrival. To this end, the sculpture’s back wall is made of mirrored glass, a surface capturing a constant stream of traffic and passersby inside,” states the press statement.

Visible by approaching the sculpture and peering down through its clear walls, its interior floor shows an enlarged dollhouse view of an empty one-bedroom rental apartment in the Hayden, a building across Jackson Avenue (available for \$3,500 – \$3,700 per month). The residential tower is named for Levy Hayden, a railroad superintendent credited with naming Long Island City in the 1850s. Within Keegan’s work, reflections of people rushing home or peering into a luxury unit suggest a momentary leveling of human and city scales, opening a space for personal reconciliation with the forms and relations to power that we are led to believe carry positive social and cultural values.

Matt Keegan is a New York-based artist. He was the subject of recent solo exhibitions at Altman Siegel, San Francisco (2019); Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2018); Participant Inc., New York (2017); Grazer Kunstverein, Austria (with Kay Rosen); and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX (with Kay Rosen, both 2016); and was featured in a two-person exhibition with the work of Corita Kent at Potts, Los Angeles (2019).