

# METRO PICTURES

Walleston, Aimee. "David Maljkovic's Formal Investigatons," *Art in America* (September 26, 2013).

## Art in America



David Maljkovich's show at New York's Metro Pictures.

Croatian artist David Maljkovic's conceptual inquiries drive straight past questions of media specificity and directly toward the means of display of artworks. For his new show at New York's Metro Pictures (through Oct. 19), the artist presents works—composed, in part, of plinths and projectors—that consider the often-unnoticed formal properties of these commonplace objects.

The show begins with *Undated* (all works 2013), a film projected on a small screen in the center of a large room. It depicts the hands of Croatian multimedia artist Ivan Kožarić (b. 1921) manipulating a small wad of tinfoil. In post-production, Maljkovic added small disturbances to the image, including delays in the film and what appears to be a scribble on the ball of foil. He then transferred the high-definition digital video to 16mm film.

"Kožarić's practice wasn't important to the piece," Maljkovic told *A.i.A.* in an interview at the gallery. "It was more important to me that I had an experienced artist's hand to realize the work. I invite him to play with form, and, in the end, it doesn't turn into any kind of form, he just keeps playing with it." That the foil never becomes a sculpture is part of Maljkovic's inquiry into the distinctions between a work of art, a gesture and a display. The piece is less about the potentially evocative narrative content—an older artist practicing his craft—than it is about the particularities of its production, and the interventions made to the film in both post-production and exhibition.

To wit: hanging from the projector is a microphone, which picks up the rhythmic sound of the film winding through the projector. Rather than use a recorded soundtrack, perhaps one of Kožarić at work, Maljkovic chose to score the piece with the ambient sounds of the fussy, antiquated exhibition device at work. "For this piece, I have a strong digital gesture that I've transferred to analog," says Maljkovic. "And I did the opposite with sound. The microphone is transferring a really analog sound to a really synthetic image."

A photographic image that hangs in an adjacent room, *Afterform*, depicts collaged layers of images that play upon the artist's interest in nearly moribund conduits of information, including a vinyl record album and a 16mm projector. For an earlier work, *Temporary Projections* (2012), the artist placed a 16mm projector on a Doric column, denoting its status as a monument to technology of the very recent past. "I wanted to treat 16-millimeter film like a sculptural object," said Maljkovic. "Film has become an object in itself, and [this is about] the fetishization of the object."

The exhibition's largest work is a room-size white platform, upon which stands a screen. A film projected onto the screen shows a series of simple appropriated cartoon characters, represented in animated line drawings, in absurd situations—a barman carries a square plinth that ends up crushing him, and two men are engaged in a tabletop game. This is the first time the artist has used animation. "These were cartoons from a Croatian architectural magazine from the '60s," Maljkovic said. "They were hanging in my studio for a really long time before I decided to use them in a piece."

For these animations, Maljkovic opted to explore the conditions of animation itself, versus using the characters and situations as a mechanism of storytelling. "The animation is a gesture, and the cartoons comment on modernist principles: The barman is carrying a very square modernistic structure. Then we have the two players, sitting in front of square forms and not knowing what to do with them," said Maljkovic. "It's quite a banal comment on modernism, so I wanted to make it come alive again—[to explore] what it means to comment now, again, on modernism."