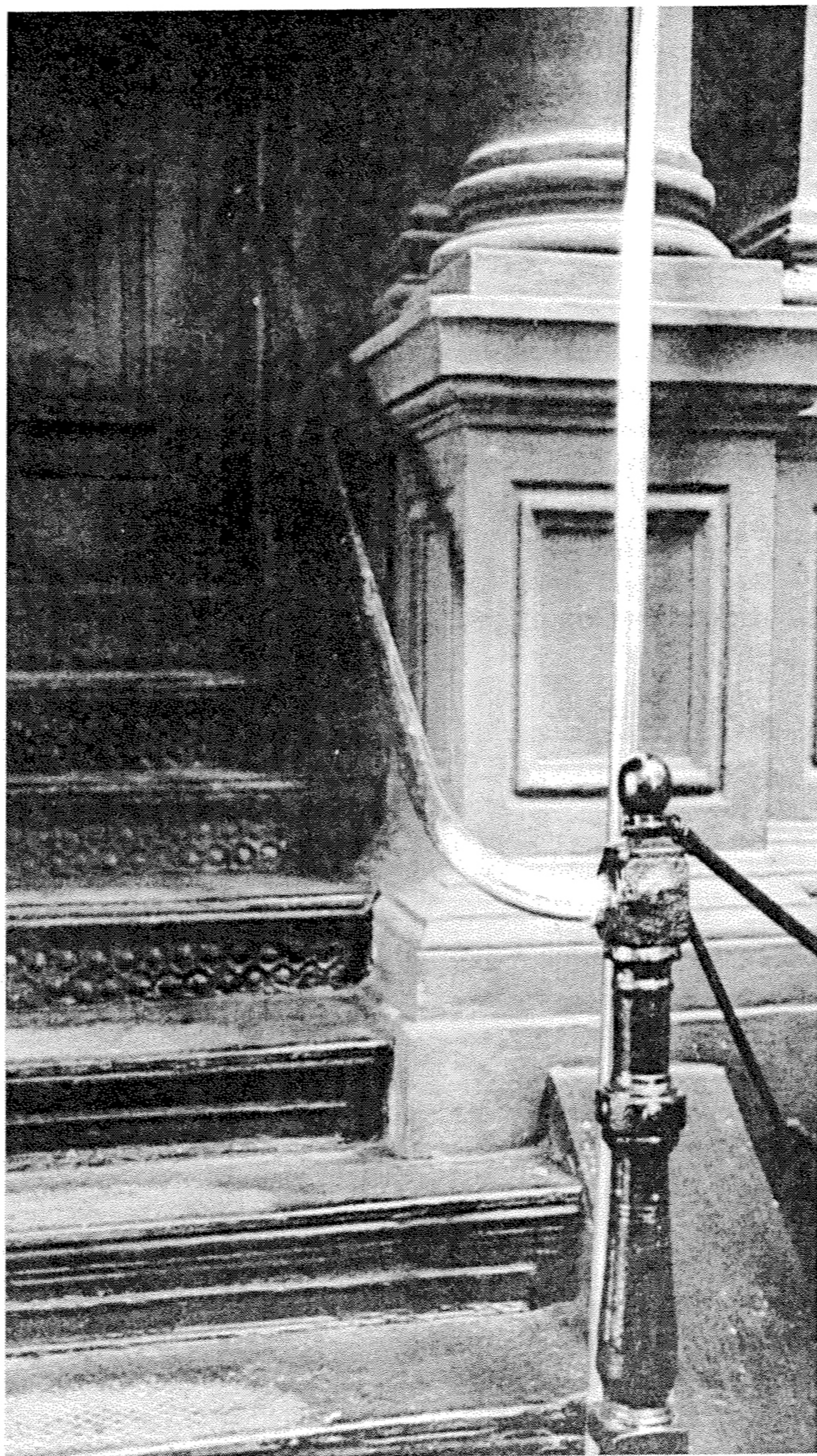


Tim Maul
MATRIX/Berkeley 146
Early July - mid September 1991
A Cultured Tourist (detail), 1991



“All invisible things adhere to the visible, the audible to the inaudible, the tactile to the nontactile. And perhaps the thinkable to the unthinkable.”

—Novalis

Tim Maul and Ernst Caramelle share an interest in the intersection of perception and imagination. Their work suggests that even the simplest awareness of our immediate surroundings exists only as part of a larger, complex puzzle. The world as they describe it is a highly ephemeral, miraculously structured web of physical matter and mental images that is neatly, if unpredictably, spun through space and time.

Because of the common elements in their conception, these two artists were asked to work together in developing their concurrent MATRIX exhibitions. The mutually agreed upon end result is less a collaboration than, in their words, “an overlap.” True to the nature of their respective aesthetics, they have decided to develop an elusive rather than an overt relationship between their two bodies of work.

Tim Maul, who typically displays his photographs in standard fashion—individually framed on the wall—took the opportunity of this more experimental exhibition to show ninety-nine of his pictures horizontally on a long, plexiglass-covered table. In so doing, Maul undermines the photographs’ illusion of receding space in favor of emphasizing the concrete, physical *place* of the work itself. Although as images they retain their semblance of the real, the photographs become more artifacts we look at rather than portals we look through. This method also circumscribes an arena in which the accumulated mass of images is more significant than any individual picture. The widely extended horizontal format suggests an infinite multiplication and extension of the images outward into the world. Thus, like Robert Rauschenberg’s so-called “flat-bed picture plane,” this installation implicates the viewers’ own space, physicality, and perceptions in conjunction with the presented images.

The subject matter of Maul's photographs also contributes to a grounding in the concrete and everyday. "Big events are not that interesting to photograph," says Maul. "I'm interested in the things which our memory would normally edit out and flush away. Not the big deal stuff, but what's in-between."¹ Thus, Maul shows us pictures of utmost banality: a loading dock, a sidewalk, a piece of stationery. In an essay on the French novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet, Jean-Paul Sartre described the function of the author's language as "a progression of names over a surface, a patient unfolding that will gradually 'paint' the object, caress it, and along its whole extent deposit a patina of tentative identification, no single term of which could stand by itself for the presented object."² The same could be said for Maul's photographs. They describe the world not with authority but with a kind of absent-mindedness, as if significance could only be captured out of the corner of one's eye.

The title of Maul's installation, *A Cultured Tourist*, derives from a short story written by the artist which is also included in this display. The story, which parallels events in Maul's own life with Borgesian uncanniness, concerns a "cultured tourist" who sees a certain collage by the German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters in a midtown Manhattan art gallery. Schwitters, like Maul, was fascinated by ordinary things which might escape the notice of most people; his art was composed of all manner of cultural detritus, from pieces of wood to bits of paper trash. The collage in question, done in 1943, contains a piece of a matchbook on which appears the address "493-5 Lexington Avenue." By chance, the matchbook, which was probably dropped in the British countryside by an American GI and picked up there by Schwitters during his exile from Germany, had found its way back to a Manhattan gallery a few minutes' walk from the address itself! The "cultured tourist" in the story, like Maul himself, becomes intrigued by this idea and walks from the gallery to the address, taking many pictures in-between.

Maul's photos of this particular walk are interspersed with a variety of other

images that are either related only tangentially or interrupt the sequence as apparent non sequiturs. Approximately fourteen of the photos, for instance, were taken in consultation with a psychic who led Maul on a tour of lower Manhattan, pointing out sites occupied by "spirits." Like their ostensible, if invisible, subjects, these images are caught in a kind of limbo within the overall installation. While they fall outside the narrative structure, they function as dream-like asides, reinforcing the overall attention to the mysteriousness of the commonplace. Two photos which appear to be inserted completely without context are color images of the actress Sarah Miles and the pop singer Boy George. The artist explains the presence of these images as "machines of desire," presiding over the installation like dual muses.

The unusual structure of Maul's presentation of photographs reflects a variety of influences. The artist himself points to the so-called "cut-up" style of the avant-garde writer William Burroughs as an inspiration for his seemingly random and open-ended sequencing of images. He cites Francesco Clemente's photo-text work of the mid-1970s as another major influence, while identifying Gilbert and George as precursors of his notion of the artist as a "tourist in his own city."³

Tim Maul was born in 1951 in Stamford, Connecticut. He attended the School of Visual Arts in New York and lived in Europe for much of the 1970s. Maul currently lives and works in New York City.

Lawrence Rinder

- 1 Interview with the artist, 17 May 1991.
- 2 Alain Robbe-Grillet, *In The Labyrinth*, trans. by Richard Howard (Grove Press, Inc., New York, 1960), p. 12.
- 3 Interview.

Work in MATRIX:
A Cultured Tourist, installation, 1991.
Courtesy of the artist.

Selected one-person exhibitions:
C.E.P.A. Gallery, Buffalo, NY '84;
"121" Art Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium '88; Brenda Wallace Gallery, Montreal '90; Orchard Gallery, Derry, Northern Ireland '91; Amy Lipton Gallery, NYC '91.

Selected group exhibitions:
Bruno Facchetti Gallery, NYC,
Acceptable Entertainment '86-90 (catalog; traveled to Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY; State Museum, Albany, Georgia; Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, CA; Alberta College of Art, Calgary; Emily Carr Art College Gallery, Vancouver; and DePree Art Gallery, Hope College, Holland, MI); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, *The Photography of Invention: American Pictures of the '80s '89* (catalog; traveled to Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC); Zabriskie Gallery, NY, *Photography* '90; Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, *The American Scene: Contemporary Photographs* '91.

Selected bibliography (see also catalogs under exhibitions):

- Fisher, Jean. Review, *Artforum* (Summer '87).
Grundberg, Andy. "Photography," *The New York Times* (Aug. 10 '90).
Jones, Bill. "Tim Maul," *Arts Magazine* (May '86).
Scott, Kitty. "Jennifer Bolande, Tim Maul," *Parachute*, no. 59 ('90).