

Petzel

KRISTIN WALSH

The working end

September 12 – October 19, 2024

35 E 67th Street

Petzel is pleased to present *The working end*, an exhibition featuring eight sculptures by New York-based artist Kristin Walsh. The show marks her debut solo exhibition and first time showing with the gallery. *The working end* will be on view from September 12 to October 19, 2024, at Petzel's Upper East Side location at 35 E 67th Street, Parlor Floor. In this new body of welded aluminum works, Walsh examines how the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) acts as both a public forum and social barometer of the collective conscience.

Walsh's practice contemplates how seemingly mundane forms of public infrastructure—traffic lights, recycling programs, and public transit—can function as overlooked modes of oppression. For *The working end*, she has constructed modified aluminum replicas of MTA fixtures including subway stanchions, a station lamp, and a turnstile, all structures which usher and anchor the passenger through their travels.

Walsh's interventions make strange the signposts of mass transit: the handle of one looped stanchion is interrupted with a shiny knot, a prehuman technology used for commemorating ritual traditions, building tools and ensnaring game. *Indicator no. 1* (2022) takes the form of an upturned lamp suspended from the ceiling, its signature green orb hovering above the floor. A historic North Star for pedestrians seeking 24-hour entry, Walsh's lamp turns on and twists in sequenced ticks. Elsewhere in the show, one finds *Indicator no. 5* resembling a keeled three-arm turnstile and intermittently dancing die, a game of box trap and lure.

The kinetic elements included throughout these works extend Walsh's longstanding engagement with motors and engines. These structures offer the artist a means of exploring the motif of potential energy; however, by including disjunctive materials like paraffin candles and matchsticks in her work, Walsh juxtaposes ancient and industrial technologies, imbuing her idiosyncratic machines with both primordial knowledge and a looming sense of dystopian alarm. Her interest in locomotion is epitomized in a new sculpture, *Engine no. 12*, which references the engine of a diesel work train built between 1966 and 1977 that is still used by the MTA. The train emits harmful traffic-related air pollution (TRAP) underground, resulting in environmental damage—largely obscured from view—that compromises the health of MTA workers and the general public.

The artist's sculptures, painstakingly hand-polished until pristine, are the result of Walsh's meticulous assembly of her machines, an antithesis to modes of mass-production. Her machines signal tactility, both reflective and immaculate in their fingerprint-less surfaces. They are methodically crafted with internal magnets and motors to conjure illusory animations, such as her mobile matchsticks: ticking, rising, and falling like small acts of magic, or actors in a play, rife with suspense. Through her seamless finishes, all evidence of engineering vanishes, leaving the objects with an unstable aura. Isolated from their original environments, the familiar checkpoints of the subway inherit a paradoxical dual nature, in which they are separate from the real world, while their uses are laid bare: instruction, control, exploitation. Walsh reveals the MTA as both concept and material, a political theater of public issues.

Walsh's sculptures may mystify as an orchestra of minor sounds and kinetic elements, yet these tactics help service the artist's conceptual orientation towards the material ground of city life and the ideological program shaping it. In this new body of work, Walsh's fastidious play with mechanics, infrastructure and motion is forever attuned to social systems of labor, access, land use and hierarchization.

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About Kristin Walsh

Kristin Walsh (b. 1989 Emerald Isle, North Carolina) lives and works in New York, NY. She earned a BFA from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2013 and an MFA from Columbia University in 2017.

Walsh's practice investigates the ways in which hidden and visible systems guide our thoughts and actions. Adopting the visual languages of machinery and public infrastructure, Walsh crafts flawless aluminum sculptures that conceal the artist's hand. By removing familiar referents from their daily context and altering them, Walsh imbues her works with a dual nature: they are at once otherworldly and expository.

Engineered, welded, and polished from stock metal, many of Walsh's sculptures contain unseen mechanical elements that animate their surfaces, likening them to horological devices. In her work, ancient and modern technologies operate in tandem, examining the dynamics between industrial production, environmental crisis, and individual agency.

Walsh's work has been included in exhibitions at Helena Anrather, New York; Lisson Gallery, New York; CAPC Museum of Modern Art, Bordeaux; Downs and Ross, New York; Signal, New York; International Objects, New York; Foreign & Domestic, New York; and others. Her work is included in the collection of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Petzel Gallery is located on the parlor floor and third floors of 35 East 67th Street New York, NY 10065. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.