

# Frieze

Reviews /

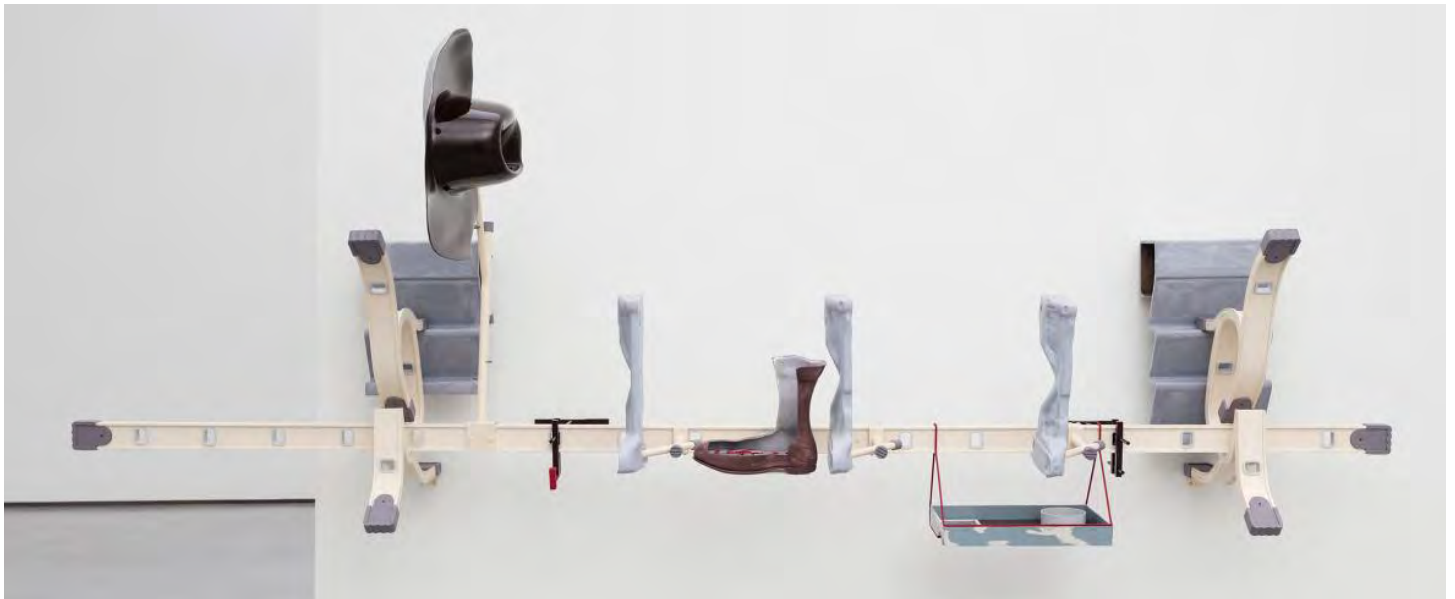
## Magali Reus’s Crisp, Tidy Beauty



BY DIANA HAMILTON

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In her solo show at Galerie Eva Presenhuber in New York, the artist’s precision leaves all possible disorder to signification



Visitors to Magali Reus’s ‘Private Road’ – her solo exhibition at Eva Presenhuber – are greeted by another *Visitor (39 Gt Jns St)* (all works mentioned 2019). A large wedge (42 x 42 x 180 cm) of carved hemlock, it is the only sculpture that falls outside of the three series that otherwise comprise the show, and the only one made exclusively from a ‘natural’ element. Lying flat on the gallery floor, this oversized doorstep depicts a portion of the gallery’s Great Jones Street entrance, with its bending doorframe and lock and chain. Reus’s materials absorb functional motifs to render them decorative, only to then turn décor into subject.



Magali Reus, *Visitor (39 Gt Jns St)*, 2019, carved hemlock, 42 × 42 × 180 cm. © Magali Reus; courtesy: the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / New York; photograph: Lewis Ronald

The gallery's numerical address (39) is carved into the wood upside down, such that I initially misread it as a GE logo. Fittingly, I also mistook the nearby 'Empty Every Night' series for lamps; these sculptures seem to shape-shift between suggestions of different bedside furniture. The series's titles reproduce the literal command to get rid of one's rubbish, but they also convey a more human void (a subject who finds herself empty, nightly). Fabricated via a combination of casting, carving, 3D modelling and printing, and made of fibreglass, polyester resin, pigments, powder coated steel rod and aluminium, plywood, C-type print, acrylic, et al., these sculptures are uncanny: they leave you on the edge of recognizing their form.

On the ground floor, the first three of 'Empty Every Night' sculptures position a trash bin-like container, affixed to the wall such that its mouth opens out, above a horizontally positioned shelf, on which rests some object – a pea pod, a partially-peeled fruit, a hairpin – manufactured in the shelf's colour. *Empty Every Night (04:19 Balloons)*, for example, resembles a large orange bucket, slightly squashed, opening onto two folded pieces of white metal. From a distance, the bucket seems to have teeth; up close, you can read the word 'snooze' inverted on the lower

panel. Inside the container, twists of steel intertwine to suggest something electric: from this view, it is a silent alarm clock, one that commands you to stay in bed. Downstairs, the other three from this series pair the tray with a jagged block, rather than a bin, at once a pillow and a weight.



Magali Reus, *Settings (Fire Flies)*, 2019, Powder coated and airbrushed steel, aluminum, sprayed UV printed resin, acrylic, grub screws, 71 × 71 × 5 cm. © Magali Reus; courtesy the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / New York; photograph: Lewis Ronald

This sounds busy, but the overall effect of the show is one of crisp, tidy beauty. Reus's precision leaves all possible disorder to signification. Though the lower shelves suggest a paint tray, there are no drips, and she uses clean connectors or frames reminiscent of a medical environment.

Another series, 'Settings', adapts the slashed circle of a 'no parking' sign into relatively minimal wall hangings that now suggest staying parked. *Settings (Table Service)* puts, in the place of a knife and fork, an inset, UV printed 'RESERVED' sign and mousetrap, with a stem of purple pansies overlaid. Numbers appear intermittently around the circle, like a clock face where the

hours are out of order. In *Settings (Fire Flies)*, the red of the admonishing circle/slash has been effaced to resemble the junction of a hammer and sickle, as if finding revolutionary potential in disobeying the street sign's instruction. The press release compares the symbolism of Private Road to that of objects in vanitas painting, but Reus's objects are not empty (*vanus*) – even if their function has been converted into form – and their meaning is less reliable than a skull's. Rather than symbols of transience, her sculptures emphasize what rests.

*Main image: Magali Reus, Dearest (Achilles), 2018, milled and powder coated aluminum and steel, hex nuts and bolts, fiberglass and polyester resin, pigments, milled and sprayed model board, C-type print, acrylic, engraved aluminum, laser cut and rusted steel, 131 x 360 x 108 cm. © Magali Reus; courtesy: the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich / New York; photograph: Lewis*

*Ronald*

**'Private Road'** runs at Eva Presenhuber, New York, through 20 June 2019.

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