

Tom Sachs

Ritual

Paris Marais
20 January—20 February 2021



Thaddaeus Ropac
London Paris Salzburg

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Opening
20 January 2021, 2—6pm

Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to present an exhibition of new sculptures by Tom Sachs. On display in the main space of the Paris Marais gallery, *Ritual* features a selection of never-before-seen works exhibited on bespoke pedestals inspired by modernist shapes, demonstrating the comprehensive spectrum of Sachs' distinctive sculptural practice. Each sculpture is characterised by the same bricolage aesthetic that has gained Sachs a unique position in the field of contemporary sculpture. Influenced by the subcultures of an urban metropolis like New York, specifically the phenomenon of New York City's corner stores, known as bodegas due to their roots in the city's latin american communities of the 1950s, the artist replicates commonplace industrial objects using everyday materials, including plywood, cardboard, resin, tape, and paint. The sculptures bear traces of their making, becoming vehicles for a reflection on the creation of value and human labour.

With *Ritual*, Sachs reflects on consumerism while dealing with the history of New York City, and American culture at large. Sachs' artistic drive is powered by what he calls 'guilty consumerism'; for him, the making of an object is a way of connecting with it, building intimacy. "*As I create, I meditate on it and the lust of acquiring a product is replaced by the love of making it.*"

Although most sculptures on view have a direct relationship with aspects of urban culture specific to New York, their formal qualities and the pedestals on which they are exhibited locate them within a more complex art historical narrative. The totem-like *ICE* (2020) is a quotidian object often found outside of bodegas and corner markets across the city. With three plywood cameras mounted on it, the sculpture becomes a panopticon and introduces the issue of surveillance in urban spaces, like a contemporary ode to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* as illustrated by a stroll in a New York neighborhood. The *Bottle Rack* (2016) equally belongs to the bodega, but also refers to Duchamp's Readymades and, more specifically, to the bottle rack once owned by Robert Rauschenberg, an artist whom Sachs identifies with, both for his art of assemblage and his capacity to salvage and transform the mundane into an artistic form.

"*In New York City, like ancient Egypt you've got cats or you've got rats.*" The Bodega cat is a ubiquitous character in New York City street life, protecting these businesses from the omnipresent threat of rats. For the exhibition, the artist has built a cat carrier modeled off the one in the 1979 sci-fi movie *Alien*.

The laundromat is also an essential necessity of city life. Open 24/7, it is often unsupervised and becomes a shelter and community hub for those who have nowhere else to go. Free and easily accessible, they have also provided cheap filming locations for independent filmmakers, forming an integral part of cinematographic subculture. Within this context, the laundry basket holds particular significance.

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The “washer woman” is an archetypal trope throughout the annals of art history, reflecting both strength and femininity, labor and sexuality. When handled by Sachs in *The Laundress* (2015), the laundry basket becomes an exploration of the grey area between the public and private, reflecting the juxtaposition of performing the mundane yet intimate rituals of daily life in a public space so intrinsic to the cultural landscape of the city.

The laundry basket itself was created utilizing an aerospace process, called *lightening*, developed by NASA to optimise the weight of an object while simultaneously increasing its strength. Applying this advanced process to an ordinary object invites further reflection on the tenuous relationship between the public and the private; the intersection of innovation and human industry with the intimacy of domestic life.

Placed on a pedestal, formally lifted from Brancusi’s studio, the lowly laundry basket is elevated to the position of high art. Sachs first encountered the work of Constantin Brancusi during his formative years at Bennington College, learning about the pioneering sculptor outside the confines of formal art history classes and developing a personal relationship with Brancusi’s work through library research and trips to New York City, Philadelphia, as well as endless trips to his atelier in the Marais.

While some sculptures in the exhibition might directly evoke the shape of Brancusi’s most famous works such as *The Bird in Space* or *The Kiss*, Sachs’ relation to the artist is more connected to the way Brancusi challenged the traditional distinction between the sculpture and the base. Many art historians have noted Brancusi’s passionate concern for the relationship between his sculptures and the space around them and demonstrated how the distinction between the sculptures, the works commonly referred to as their bases, and the other objects in Brancusi’s studio became even more blurred from 1915 onwards. This blur, which corresponds to a questioning of the parameters of sculpture, certainly informed Sachs’ own ambiguous relation to sculpture-as-object and object-as-sculpture.

About the artist

Tom Sachs was born in 1966 in New York, where he lives and works. He studied at the Architectural Association, London in 1987 and graduated from Bennington College, Vermont in 1989. In an early exhibition, he made Knoll office furniture from phone books and duct tape; later, he recreated Le Corbusier’s 1952 Unité d’Habitation using only foam core and a glue gun. Major projects have included his versions of the Apollo 11 Lunar Excursion Module, the bridge of the battleship USS Enterprise, and a 1:1 model of a McDonald’s Frying Station, now in the collection of the Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo. An important survey of his work was shown at the Astrup Fearnley in 2006, followed by solo exhibitions at the Fondazione Prada, Milan (2006); Space Program: Mars, Park Avenue Armory, New York (2012); Space Program: Europa, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2016); and Boombox Retrospective 1999–2016, Brooklyn Museum, New York (2016). In 2016–17, he created *Tea Ceremony* for the Noguchi Museum, New York and the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas – a distinctive reworking of chanoyu, a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, including the myriad elements essential to the ritual. His *Swiss Passport Office*, created for Thaddaeus Ropac, London in 2018, reflected contemporary concerns relating to Brexit, the Syrian crisis, Trump’s immigration policies and global citizenship. A retrospective of his work was shown at SCHAUWERK Sindelfingen, Germany in 2019–20, followed by *Space Program: Rare Earths* at Deichtorhallen Hamburg in 2021.



VX 1000, 2016

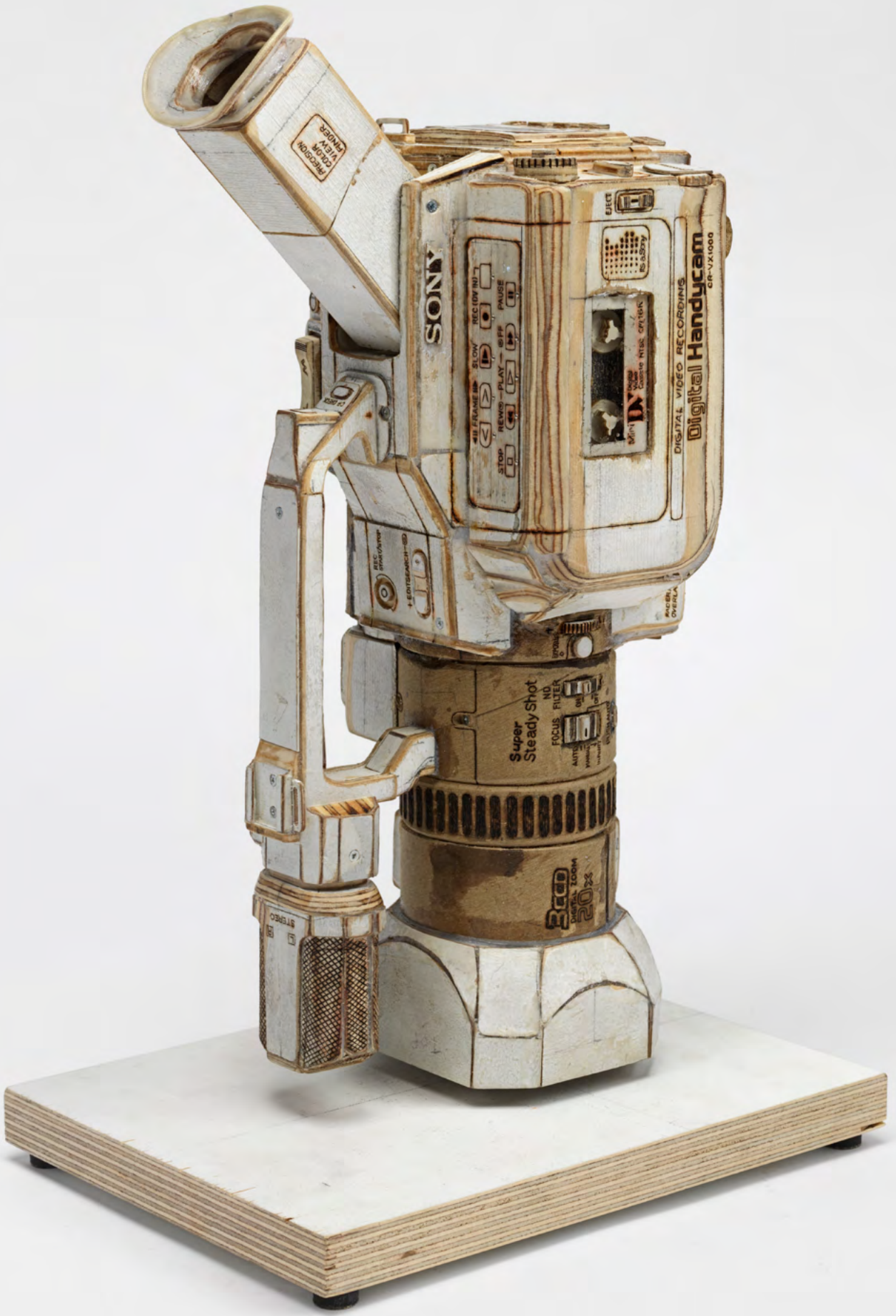
Plywood, latex paint, cardboard, epoxy resin, steel
hardware

43.2 x 20.3 x 20.3 cm (17 x 8 x 8 in)

(TSA 1308)

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The Kiss, 2016
Plywood, steel hardware
81.3 x 33 x 27.9 cm (32 x 13 x 11 in)
(TSA 1423)

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The Laundress, 2015
Latex paint, polyurethane varnish,
epoxy resin, plywood
41.9 x 70.8 x 70.8 cm (16.5 x 27.9 x 27.9 in)
(TSA 1424)

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Cup Noodles, 2020

Pyrography and gold leaf on plywood

Sculpture 21.9 x 22.2 x 48.3 cm (8.6 x 8.7 x 19 in)

Pedestal overall 109.2 x 47 x 48.3 cm (43 x 18,5 x 19 in)

Pedestal bottom 50.2 x 37.5 cm (19.7 x 14.7 in)

(TSA 1425)

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The Original
CHICKEN FLAVOR
NOODLES
QUIP
NISSIN
The Original
NOODLES
CHICKEN FLAVOR
WITH NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS



*CONTAINS SMALL AMOUNTS OF NATURALLY OCCURRING GLUTAMATES

CHICKEN FLAVOR

WITH NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS

70662-04803



The Original
CHICKEN FLAVOR
NOODLES
QUIP
NISSIN



0 00 70662 04803 0

30 PACK



Cat Carrier, 2020

Plywood, latex, paint, steel, hardware

Sculpture 41.9 x 33 x 53.3 cm (16.5 x 13 x 21 in)

Pedestal 81.3 x 34.3 x 55.9 cm (32 x 13.5 x 22 in)

(TSA 1427)

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Tide Bottle (orange), 2020

Mixed media, including synthetic, polymer on cardboard and epoxy resin

Sculpture 25.4 x 20.3 x 10.2 cm (10 x 8 x 4 in)

Pedestal Overall 115.6 x 38.1 x 38.1 cm (45.5 x 15 x 15 in)

Pedestal Bottom 30.5 x 30.5 cm (12 x 12 in)

(TSA 1428)

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Tide

64
LOADS

ORIGINAL

CAUTION: EYE IRRITANT HARMFUL
IF SWALLOWED. SEE BACK LABEL.

DETERGENT

2.95 L (3.12 US QT)
100 FL OZ LIQ.



Alligator Kelly Bag (Pink), 2020
Pyrography on plywood, canvas
Sculpture 35.6 x 33 x 13.3 cm (14 x 13 x 5.2 in)
Pedestal Overall 31.5 x 18.5 x 17.6 in
Pedstal bottom 13.2 x 12.7 in
(TSA 1429)

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McDonald's Crate, 2017

Pyrography and synthetic polymer on plywood

Sculpture 31.1 x 33.2 x 33.2 cm (12.2 x 13.1 x 13.1 in)

Pedestal Overall 106.7 x 38.1 x 40.6 cm (42 x 15 x 16 in)

Pedestal bottom 30.5 x 33 cm (12 x 13 in)

(TSA 1430)

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Ice Box, 2020

Plywood, authentic polymer and mixed media including steel hardware and security cameras

191.8 x 63.5 x 45.7 cm (75.5 x 25 x 18 in)

(TSA 1431)

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Porte-Bouteilles (Bottle Rack), 2016
Plywood, resin and synthetic polymer paint
59.1 x 36.8 cm (23.27 x 14.49 in)
Ed. 1 of 3
(TSA 1303)

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Currently on view



Jean-Marc Bustamante
Grande Vacance

Until 20 February 2021
Paris Marais



Bjarne Melgaard
Elisabeth and Me

Until 13 February 2021
Paris Marais



30 Years
in Paris

Until 26 June 2021
Paris Pantin



Yan Pei-Ming
Against the Light

Until 23 March 2021
Salzburg