

# ARTFORUM

## Critics' Picks



View of "Madeline Hollander: Heads/Tails," 2020

### Madeline Hollander

BORTOLAMI | 55 WALKER  
55 Walker Street  
January 10–February 22, 2020

From 1931 to 1964, the traffic lights along Manhattan's Fifth Avenue were topped with bronze statuettes of Mercury, the Roman god of transportation. In "Heads/Tails," choreographer and artist Madeline Hollander's exhibition at 55 Walker—a new project space shared by Andrew Kreps Gallery, Bortolami, and kaufmann repetto—a figurine of Mercury gazes out the window over the congestion at Walker Street and Broadway, just beyond the gallery. For an ambitious installation filling two long walls, Hollander shunted data from the intersection's traffic signals into hundreds of disembodied, gemlike head- and taillights.

Brake lights spring to life in bursts, climaxing in a spate of red. When they flicker off and get supplanted by the seraphic glow of headlights, our shoulders relax at the prospect of motion. Hollander coded the car lights to mimic the unconscious braking behaviors of thirty-six driver profiles such as the texter, the paranoiac, or the tailgater. Regardless of expressive variances, they all move within the boundaries of algorithms shaped by prevailing ideologies via urban planning, transit, *progress*. An heir to the Judson Dance Theater's tactics of mundanity, Hollander has viewers giving the mindlessness of traffic close scrutiny. She also made eight watercolors to chronicle her objects' performance, which seem to riff on systems of dance notation ranging from Labanotation's rigid geometry to Benesh Movement Notation's figurative gymnastics. With pleasure we dip into her synesthetic imaginary: Systems of brightly colored circles, sprightly ink squiggles, and diminutive dancers pirouette across pages. One watercolor positions a chain of figures atop rows of colored blocks: a traffic jam abstraction. Outside, we hear the blare of a horn, which heralds the cars' slow crawl. Mercury has granted clemency, if only for a moment.

— Cassie Packard