

Captain Petzel

ROBERT HEINECKEN

March 12 – April 18, 2015

Opening: Thursday, March 12, 6 – 8.30pm

In conjunction with the Heinecken Trust, Captain Petzel is pleased to announce the first solo show by the American artist with works from 1969 until 1999. Robert Heinecken (1931 – 2006) described himself as a “para-photographer”. Rather than standing behind the camera he combined existing photographs and their reproductions from the world of mass media into new meanings and configurations. Mass media for him is the most important vehicle from which we gain information. Heinecken expressed himself through lithographs, collages, photograms, photo-based paintings, sculptures, installations and time-based work with TVs and slide projectors, chiefly interested in the incongruous, the ironic, and the satirical within socio/political or sexual/erotic contexts.

In this exhibition ranging from collage, sculpture, reconstructed magazines, and Polaroid works, Heinecken's artistic output is varied in medium though extremely focused in its intent. It features a full collection of *Periodicals 1 - 10* (made between 1969-1972) most recently exhibited at the artist's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which traveled to the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Consisting of ten reconstituted magazines, the *Periodicals* shatter the boundary between the banal and the surreal, delving into the irrational, uncanny, and often lurid undertones present within American representations of gender, family, race, war, and class. Here, centerfolds meet inside-cover cigarette ads, fashion models intersect with nude photos, and Vietnam soldiers are made to walk upon editorial advertisements. Using juxtaposition and uncanny combination, Heinecken's work denies passive looking, implicating the viewer as a complicit participant in the construction of American media imagery. In *Time (1st Group)* (1969) Heinecken placed lithographic images from pornographic men's magazines onto pages of reassembled TIME magazines. Heinecken then (re)circulated these reassembled magazines within the public sphere, making visible entire systems through which information is exchanged.

Heinecken's *Revised Magazines* (1989-1994) follow a path of alterations in which three-dimensional photomontages of blended ads and images were created using excision, this style of visible mediation characterizes the well-known *Revised Magazine: 150 Years of Photojournalism* (1990). Here, original editorial intent is destabilized as two-dimensional faces, bodies, clothing, cigarettes, and storylines intersect and interact in a jumble of (re)created pages. With this, Heinecken undoes the naturalization of cultural signs by refashioning the seemingly recognizable into a jumble of disordered fragments.

Heinecken's further examination of American pop culture can be seen in the several collaged “standing figure” sculptures exhibited throughout the gallery. Propped up in groups, these sculptures reference the two-dimensional, life-size celebrity figures that the artist first saw in the 1980's being sold by street vendors on a boardwalk in Venice, California. However, in these sculptures, Heinecken collages unexpected elements to create a figure at once recognizable yet not easily apprehended, constantly upending our perceptions.

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Heinecken takes critical aim at mass media's seemingly stable images in order to reveal the ideological systems of control influencing not only their creation, but also their creator. This is related to Heinecken's self-proclaimed involvement in "redefining [...] the implied boundaries of what photography is" wherein he investigates not only the technological possibilities of the photo-related medium, but also the conceptual paradigms of that medium itself. While the (re)printed and altered pages address an array of political, cultural, and social issues, each page is fundamentally informed by Heinecken's subjective alterations which upend the ontological and objective. In rejection of West Coast modernism, Heinecken's magazine works integrate the temporal with the technical, extending avant-garde practices of the 1920s and 30s into a neo-avant-garde practice informed by artifice, assemblage, documentary, and appropriation.

In 2014 a major retrospective took place at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which traveled to the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. A solo exhibition of Heinecken's Polaroid works "Lessons in Posing Subjects" is on view at Fri Art Kunsthalle in Fribourg, Switzerland until May 3, 2015.

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Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 6pm