

FRIEDRICH PETZEL GALLERY

ROBERT HEINECKEN: COPYWORK

November 10th – December 22nd, 2011

Opening reception: Thursday, November 10th, 6-8pm

Finally, you confound
the prim and the obscene
and show us function

of light and time
we dare not hurry
and cannot avoid.

I will say once
that your method is harsh
and your art tender.

Now let's see you
get out of
that one?

- Marvin Bell from his poem "To Heinecken the Photographer," 1975, Spain and Morocco

Friedrich Petzel Gallery is pleased to announce its first solo exhibition of works by Robert Heinecken. This exhibition will bring together iconic pieces, some of which are being

exhibited for the first time.

Robert Heinecken has been called one of America's most influential contemporary photographers, and yet he rarely used a camera. His definition of photography encompassed everything related to the photo; rather than focusing on the photographic image as a creation derived solely from a camera, his interest was on the relation of methods and formalism—often in an irreverent and humorous way—to popular media.

Heinecken's artistic output examined the material possibilities of the medium, and created new methods to record and produce photographic objects using collage, lithography, Polaroid, silver gelatin prints, color processes, digital prints and experimental uses of darkroom chemistry. The nature of his output resists categorization, but he preferred, if any, the term *paraphotographer*, as a nod to the photographic processes he most frequently used.

Copywork will feature a full portfolio of one of the artist's best-known works: the *Are You Rea* series (1964-1968). This series began as photograms of magazines and newspapers that were subsequently made into gelatin silver prints, and finally became an edition of lithographs. *Are You Rea* demonstrates Heinecken's obsessive urge to process the same images in a multitude of ways, and directly addresses the artist's affinity with Dadaism and Surrealism. The word "real" in an advertisement becomes the truncated "rea" in the photogram, and is intentionally pronounced "ray" to reference Man Ray's "rayographs." Each lithograph is revelatory in its juxtapositions of both copy and imagery from American advertising, exposing the mass media's role in subconscious suggestion and promotion of capitalist consumption (sex, food, physical beauty). Heinecken considered pictures to represent manufactured experience, and wanted to expose the complicity in seemingly casual, everyday media imagery.

In addition to *Are You Rea*, the exhibition will showcase two iconic Polaroid works: *Tuxedo Striptease* (1984) and a selection from Heinecken's *Lessons in Posing* series (1981-1982). Also

on view will be lithographic film works, magazines, inkjet print reliefs, and standing figures and cut outs, terms that Heinecken employed to identify his life-size collaged figures of women, men, objects and animals juxtaposed into uncanny relationships.

Robert Heinecken's work is currently on view in the two-person exhibition *Speaking in Tongues: Wallace Berman and Robert Heinecken, 1961 – 1973* at the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, from October 2, 2011 – January 22, 2012. There is a catalogue forthcoming for this show, and the exhibition will subsequently travel to the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona, Tucson. In 2007, his work was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, and in 1999 a thirty-five-year retrospective was presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago that toured the same year to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. His works are in numerous public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. He was the founder of UCLA's photography department in 1964 and taught there for thirty-one years, during which he lived in both Los Angeles and Chicago. Robert Heinecken was born in 1931 in Denver, Colorado and passed away in 2006 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

A new monograph published by Ridinghouse is available. Please visit www.ridinghouse.co.uk for more information, or inquire at the gallery's front desk.

Friedrich Petzel Gallery is located at 537 West 22nd Street New York, NY 10011. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Marcella Heemsen at marcella@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467. For general inquiries, please email info@petzel.com.