

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS A RETROSPECTIVE OF ROBERT HEINECKEN IN *ROBERT HEINECKEN: OBJECT MATTER*

The Works Reflect Heinecken's Obsession with Popular Culture and Its Effects on Society

Robert Heinecken: Object Matter

March 15–September 7, 2014

The Michael H. Dunn Galleries, second floor

Press Preview: Monday, March 3, 2014, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

NEW YORK, February 6, 2014—The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Robert Heinecken: Object Matter***, the first retrospective of the work of Robert Heinecken since his death in 2006 and the first exhibition on the East Coast to cover four decades of the artist's unique practice, from the early 1960s through the late 1990s, on view from March 15 to September 7, 2014. Describing himself as a "para-photographer," because his work stood "beside" or "beyond" traditional ideas associated with photography, Heinecken worked across multiple mediums, including photography, sculpture, printmaking, and collage. Culling images from newspapers, magazines, pornography, and television, he recontextualized them through collage and assemblage, photograms, darkroom experimentation, and rephotography. His works explore themes of commercialism, Americana, kitsch, sex, the body, and gender. In doing so, the works in this exhibition expose his obsession with popular culture and its effects on society, and with the relationship between the original and the copy. *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter* is organized by Eva Respini, Curator, with Drew Sawyer, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition will travel to the Hammer Museum, and will be on view there from October 5, 2014 through January 17, 2015.

Heinecken dedicated his life to making art and teaching, establishing the photography program at UCLA in 1964, where he taught until 1991. He began making photographs in the early 1960s. The antithesis of the fine-print tradition exemplified by West Coast photographers Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, who photographed landscapes and objects in sharp focus and with objective clarity, Heinecken's early work is marked by high contrast, blur, and under- or overexposure, as seen in *Shadow Figure* (1962) and *Strip of Light* (1964). In the mid-1960s he began combining and sequencing disparate pictures, as in *Visual Poem/About the Sexual Education of a Young Girl* (1965), which comprises seven black-and-white photographs of dolls with a portrait of his then-five-year-old daughter Karol at the center.

The female nude is a recurring motif, featured in *Refractive Hexagon* (1965), one of several "photopuzzles" composed of photographs of female body parts mounted onto 24 individual "puzzle" pieces. Other three-dimensional sculptures—geometric volumes ranging in height from five to 22 inches—consist of photographs mounted onto individual blocks, which rotate

independently around a central axis. In *Fractured Figure Sections* (1967), as in *Refractive Hexagon*, the female figure is never resolved as a single image—the body is always truncated, never contiguous. In contrast, a complete female figure can be reconstituted in his largest photo-object, *Transitional Figure Sculpture* (1965), a towering 26-layer octagon composed from photographs of a nude that have been altered using various printing techniques. At the time, viewer engagement was key to creating random configurations and relationships in the work; any number of possibilities may exist, only to be altered with the next manipulation. Today, due to the fragility of the works, these objects are displayed in Plexiglas-covered vitrines. However, the number of sculptures and puzzles gathered here offer the viewer a sense of this diversity.

Heinecken's groundbreaking suite *Are You Rea* (1964–68) is a series of 25 photograms made directly from magazine pages. Representative of a culture that was increasingly commercialized, technologically mediated, and suspicious of established truths, *Are You Rea* cemented Heinecken's interest in the multiplicity of meanings inherent in existing images and situations. Culled from more than 2000 magazine pages, the work includes pictures from publications such as *Life*, *Time*, and *Woman's Day*, contact-printed so that both sides are superimposed in a single image. Heinecken's choice of pages and imagery are calculated to reveal specific relationships and meanings—ads for Coppertone juxtaposed with ads for spaghetti dinners and an article about John F. Kennedy superimposed on an ad for Wessex carpets—the portfolio's narrative moves from relatively commonplace and alluring images of women to representations of violence and the male body.

Heinecken began altering magazines in 1969 with a series of 120 periodicals titled *MANSMAG: Homage to Werkman and Cavalcade*. He used the erotic men's magazine *Cavalcade* as source material, making plates of every page, and randomly printing them on pages that were then reassembled into a magazine, now scrambled. In the same year, he disassembled numerous *Time* magazines, imprinting pornographic images taken from *Cavalcade* on every page, and reassembled them with the original *Time* covers. He circulated these reconstituted magazines by leaving them in waiting rooms or slipping them onto newsstands, allowing the work to come full circle—the source material returning to its point of origin after modification. He reprised this technique in 1989 with an altered issue of *Time* titled *150 Years of Photojournalism*, a greatest hits of historical events seen through the lens of photography.

Transparent film is also used in many of Heinecken's works to explore different kinds of juxtapositions. In *Kodak Safety Film/Christmas Mistake* (1971), pornographic images are superimposed on a Christmas snapshot of Heinecken's children with the suggestion in the title that somehow two rolls of film were mixed up at the photo lab. *Kodak Safety Film/Taos Church* (1972) takes photography itself as a subject, picturing an adobe church in New Mexico that was famously photographed by Ansel Adams and Paul Strand, and painted by Georgia O'Keeffe and John Marin. Presented as a negative, Heinecken's version transforms an icon of modernism into a murky structure flanked by a pickup truck, telephone wires, and other modern-day debris.

Heinecken's hybrid photographic paintings, created by applying photographic emulsion on canvas, are well represented in the exhibition. In *Figure Horizon #1* (1971), Heinecken reprised the cut-and-reassemble techniques from his puzzles and photo-sculptures, sequencing images of sections of the nude female body, to create impossible undulating landscapes. *Cliché Vary*, a pun on the 19th-century *cliché verre* process, is comprised of three large-scale modular works, all from 1974: *Autoeroticism*, *Fetishism*, and *Lesbianism*. The works are comprised of separately stretched canvas panels with considerable hand-applied color on the photographic image, invoking clichés associated with autoeroticism, fetishism, and lesbianism. Reminiscent of his cut-and-reassembled pieces, each panel features disjointed views of bodies and fetish objects that never make a whole, and increase in complexity, culminating with *Lesbianism*, which is made with seven or eight different negatives.

In the mid-1970s, Heinecken experimented with new materials introduced by Polaroid—specifically the SX-70 camera (which required no darkroom or technical know-how)—to produce the series *He/She* (1975–1980) and, later, *Lessons in Posing Subjects* (1981–82). Heinecken experimented with different types of instant prints, including the impressive two-panel *S.S. Copyright Project: "On Photography"* (1978), made the year after the publication of Susan Sontag's collection of essays *On Photography* (1977). *The S.S. Copyright Project* consists of a magnified and doubled picture of Sontag, derived from the book's dustcover portrait (taken by Jill Krementz). The work equates legibility with physical proximity—from afar, the portraits appear to be grainy enlargements from a negative (or, to contemporary eyes, pixilated low-resolution images), but at close range, it is apparent that the panels are composed of hundreds of small photographic scraps stapled together. The portrait on the left is composed of photographs of Sontag's text; the right features random images taken around Heinecken's studio by his assistant.

Heinecken's first large-scale sculptural installation, *TV/Time Environment* (1970), is the earliest in a series of works that address the increasingly dominant presence of television in American culture. In the installation, a positive film transparency of a female nude is placed in front of a functioning television set in an environment that evokes a living room, complete with recliner chair, plastic plant, and rug. Continuing his work with television, Heinecken created videograms—direct captures from the television that were produced by pressing Cibachrome paper onto the screen to expose the sensitized paper. *Inaugural Excerpt Videograms* (1981) features a composite from the live television broadcast of Ronald Reagan's inauguration speech and the surrounding celebrations. The work, originally in 27 parts, now in 24, includes randomly chosen excerpts of the oration and news reports of it. *Surrealism on TV* (1986) explores the idea of transparency and layering using found media images to produce new readings. It features a slide show comprised of more than 200 images loaded into three slide projectors and projected in random order. The images generally fit into broad categories, which include newscasters, animals, TV evangelists, aerobics, and explosions.

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PUBLICATION:

The accompanying publication *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter* by Eva Respini is the most complete survey of the artist’s oeuvre. Respini’s essay sets his work in the context of twentieth-century photographic experimentation and conceptual art; an illustrated essay about his experimental techniques by conservator Jennifer Jae Gutierrez contributes to the sparse scholarship on Heinecken’s working methods. A selection of Heinecken’s eloquent writings on art and photography foregrounds the artist’s voice in the reading of his work today. 188 pages; 300 illustrations. Hardcover, \$50. Available from MoMA stores and online at MoMAstore.org. Distributed to the trade by ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United States and Canada. Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames & Hudson.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

**Robert Heinecken: Art and Pornography
Wednesday, March 26, 2014, 6:00 p.m.**

This panel, held in conjunction with the exhibition *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter*, explores pornography in art as it pertains to Heinecken's work and to visual culture in general over the last 40 years. Participants include film director and photographer Larry Clark, Sarah Nicole Prickett, editor of *Adult* magazine, and artists Marilyn Minter and A. L. Steiner. Moderated by Eva Respini, organizer of the exhibition and curator in MoMA's Department of Photography.

AUDIO TOUR:

The accompanying audio guide features commentaries by curators Eva Respini and Drew Sawyer, as well as Heinecken speaking about his own work, excerpted from a lecture the artist delivered in 1988. MoMA Audio+ is available free of charge at the Museum and is also available for streaming and download at MoMA.org, MoMA.org/audio, and as a podcast on iTunes. MoMA Audio+ is sponsored by Bloomberg.

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For downloadable high-resolution images, register at MoMA.org/press.

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, MoMA.org.

Hours: Saturday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m.

Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00–8:00 p.m.

MoMA.org: No service charge for tickets ordered on MoMA.org. Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs).