



ART PRACTICAL

MATT LIPPS: "Home" Review

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Matt Lipps' photographs, currently on view at Silverman Gallery, are geologic. Not literally—he doesn't photograph rocks—but metaphorically. Just as the settlement of minerals in sedimentary rock reveals changes in the earth over centuries, Lipps' images, layered in both subject matter and construction, tell a story of time passing.

Lipps begins by photographing his childhood home, the house in which his mother still lives. The rooms are presented as single, fixed tableaux, the individual particles subsumed by the whole. Intricate arrangements of household items attest to the accumulation of objects over time. Newspaper clippings affixed to the freezer door took years to build up; framed portraits hanging along the narrow hallway evidence decades of growth and change. Plastic lawn chairs sit stacked in the garage, waiting for the right season. In Lipps' interiors, the home and its objects both record the passing of time and resist time's fluidity. The arrangements can be read as assertions against change; the stagnant interior a bulwark against the fluctuating world outside the home's walls.

"Untitled (Hallway)," 2008; C-Print, 46 x 31 inches

Lipps prints these black-and-white photographs on various sheets of 8 x 10 in. paper—white, red, orange, green, and other hues. He then dissects the images, following the geometry of the represented objects. He cuts the paper along the bottom of a kitchen cupboard, the top of a refrigerator, the angle of a hallway. Then, he reassembles the images, joining together the multicolored and black-and-white fractions into a reconstruction of the original scene. The different colored rays resemble a color wheel or series of laser beams.

For the next layer, Lipps cribs features from Ansel Adams photographs, cutting out rock faces and cloud-covered skies and propping them against his photographs of domestic spaces. The claustrophobic interiors are countered with Adams' expansive exteriors; both are extremes.

According to gallerist Jessica Silverman, Adams' images of natural wonders were Lipps' first introduction to photography. He believed that being a photographer meant taking pictures like Ansel's. In his own work, Lipps refutes this innocent notion on two fronts. He juxtaposes his onetime domestic environment with Adams' grandiose scenes, contrasting his reality with that of the famous nature photographer. In doing so, Lipps becomes a photographer whose images, though populated with Adams' work, look nothing like them.

Lipps then takes this photographic sculpture—the reconstructed image of the interior and the Adams collage elements—and photographs it, collapsing its various layers into one flat and cohesive image. The process mimics the conflation of the parts with the whole that occurs in the domestic scenes. In some pieces, the various layers are apparent. In "Untitled (Stove)" (2008), an image of a serene lake and mountain slices through Lipps' mother's kitchen, held up by two visible supports. In "Untitled (Doorway)" (2008), a collection of rock and water scenes, arranged so as to appear abstract, cast a shadow on a photograph of a hallway. In all the images on view, the wood grain of the table on which the sculptures are photographed is visible. Such elements draw attention to the space outside the picture frame, highlighting the relationship between inside and outside, insularity and exposure, apparent within the images' various layers.

While Lipps' images can be understood formally, even scientifically, they can also be experienced sensually. Think of your own childhood home—how you could navigate the corridors between rooms in the dark, how your body memorized the placement of each light switch. Remember the arrangements that seemed set in stone, the placement of the toaster oven and the oven mitts and furniture. The world outside its walls seemed unstructured and grandiose, mysterious and intimidating. Remember how you thought it would look like an Ansel Adams photograph and how you felt when you found out it did not.