

MATT LIPPS: HORIZON/S Review

Marc Selwyn Fine Art
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"Untitled (Architecture)," Matt Lipps, 2010

Let's take a step out of the Bay Area. A few steps, even -- all the way to Los Angeles, where photographer Matt Lipps' current show **HORIZON/S** is on view at the Marc Selwyn Fine Art Gallery.

Lipps, who lives and works in San Francisco and Los Angeles, is known for his photographic/collage/sculptural investigations and has sustained his basic strategies in this imaginative new body of work.

Using source material from 1958-1968 issues of the magazine *Horizon*, Lipps created large photographs of dense collages, with carefully selected and arranged imagery. *Horizon* billed itself as "A Magazine of the Arts," a concept not dissimilar from Lipps' own concerns: a curated attempt to comprehend culture through our relationship to pictures. The results are lush and strange, with as refined a sensibility for painterly composition as conceptual content.

HORIZON/S is in keeping with Lipps' oeuvre. In his 2008 series entitled **Home**, Lipps overlaid historic Ansel Adams photographs atop interior images of his childhood house. In that series, as in **HORIZON/S**, his collaged diorama's are lit dramatically for dark shadows in the final photograph -- think of floodlights on a stage performer. The effect creates a simultaneous sense of flatness and depth. This series continues the artist's unusual and effective use of palette, printing in a saccharin range of pinks, greens, blues, yellows and grays. Neither body of work casts judgment on its subject; rather, each applies the terms of the medium to achieve a new consideration of its substantive concern.

But if **Home** was using photographic elements to conduct a personal, even nostalgic, investigation of context, **HORIZON/S** is a more cerebral one, mining the perceptions and strategies of Anthropology and Art History, two disciplines that picture and define cultural understanding. In this new body of work, Lipps queries the established categories and terms of looking at pictures (for instance, why not group based on gender, era, color, originality of subject?), playfully proposing a different model.

Lipps has a democratic eye, which more than anything, is ruled by an astute visual curiosity. The photographs throughout the show -- **Untitled (Architecture)**, **Untitled (Women's Heads)** and **Untitled (Men in Suits)** to name a few -- are composed and arranged without academic discrimination. Documents of sculptural antiquities freely overlap with posing film stars. His grand opus, **Untitled (Archive)**, is a look behind the curtain. In what appears to be Lipps' literal archive of cut-outs for the project, the six panels are aligned to form one consecutive, if overlapping, image. The diorama pictured rests atop a long wooden shelf, and, while still incredibly complex and layered, the otherwise seamless process itself is revealed as Lipps allows a clearer understanding of figure and ground.

In infusing historical photographs with layers of imagery and deeper inquiry, Lipps has created a sum that is provocative, compelling, and greater than its beautiful parts. And Los Angeles, a city of continuously re-contextualized visual constructs, is the ideal place to show these photographs. If you get down to LA before August 20, visit the show, which is Lipps' debut with the gallery (Selwyn also counts Bay Area photographer Richard Misrach on its roster). But wherever you are in California, keep your eye on this increasingly important and inventive American photographer.