

MATT LIPPS: *Special Problems*

April 25 - May 29, 2014



Matt Lipps, *Caring*

Over the past three to four years Lipps' work has engaged with juxtapositions of scale, time, and familiarity – focusing on subjective hierarchies in order to explore ideas of context and categorisation within our culture. Through a process of extracting images from diverse source materials, Lipps would cut out and re-organise visual icons from our social history – forging his own compositions within built up three-dimensional sculptural stage sets. While this new series of photographs sees this process continue with the cutting out of almost 500 figures, Lipps' *Library* actually points to a far more personal take on the practice of appropriation, paying tribute to the analog medium while posing new questions about the future of digital photographs and imaging.

From 1970-1972, Time-Life published a 17-volume set of books called *Library of Photography*. Each volume delivered a comprehensive how-to manual on everything photographic – from techniques and genres, to the conservation of photographs – each

illustrated with exquisite black and white gravure reproductions. As a perfect template for an historical commentary on the practice of photography, Lipps cut out and assembled hundreds of figures from the books, building cardboard structures for them, so they became autonomous, moveable 'actors' on a set of small glass shelves built in his studio. Each volume would then become the subject and title of each of the 17 works in his series – where *Documentary*, *Photojournalism*, *Caring*, *Camera*, *Travel*, and *Special Problems* – would all contain a relevant or suggestive background image taken from Lipps' own archives.

Acknowledging the prescribed and didactic way the publication reached out to its audience, Lipps was reminded of a series of 35 mm images he took while studying photography. Some appeared to be generic, knock-offs almost of luminaries such as Ansel Adams or Walker Evans. In re-examining these images – filling them with colour through digital enhancement, Lipps makes a comment on the conformity of production – giving new life to images both his own and appropriated. The final work – a photograph of the sculptural construction in front of his own archival image – creates a scale-shift that not only reflects on the very operation of photography, but reveals a tension between the subjective and objective uses of the medium and its perspectives on history.