

MATT LIPPS: "Matt Lipps at Marc Selwyn Fine Art"

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Pictures are not what they used to be. Neither are people.

Digital technology is largely the reason, mostly because it has increased the number of images people see and decreased the amount of time we look at each one. Artists are also responsible, often in ways that rely on digital technology but fly in the face of its standard operating procedures.

At Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Matt Lipps' large-format Cibachromes throw a monkey wrench into the perceptual systems of viewers weaned on the Internet. To see his 11 wonderfully disjunctive photographs is to fall into a world where 24/7 connectivity and need-to-know-now instantaneity lose their stranglehold.

On first glance, Lipps' pictures look pretty slick. Each shows a tastefully composed cluster of people, sculptures, buildings and banners, the mix made up of modern masterpieces from 20th century Europe and icons from ancient Greece, Africa and the Middle East.

A closer look reveals that Lipps' images are not collages. Each depicts a diorama-sized stage, complete with tinted spotlights, matching backdrops, variously scaled props and mind-boggling shadows. The stars of Lipps' mini photo-shoots are paper doll-style figures that he has cut out of an encyclopedia-style bimonthly publication that was popular in the United States from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. The low-tech, DIY skill-set is endearing. It's also effective.

The shock of Surrealism plays no role in Lipps' art. All of the people in his non-Photoshopped prints seem personable and sympathetic. Whether they originated as sculptures or paintings or etchings or newspaper reproductions, they all come to life in Lipps' oddly old-fashioned photographs.

Something similar happens to the equestrian statues, mythical figures and abstract sculptures in his pictures. And it doesn't take a great imaginative leap for the Medieval, Romantic and Modernist buildings to likewise take on their own lives.

In a society dominated by the logic of addiction – for maniacal focus and narrow-minded drive – Lipps' enchanting works make a place for pleasure, for a type of playfulness that may seem corny but whose absence is tragic.