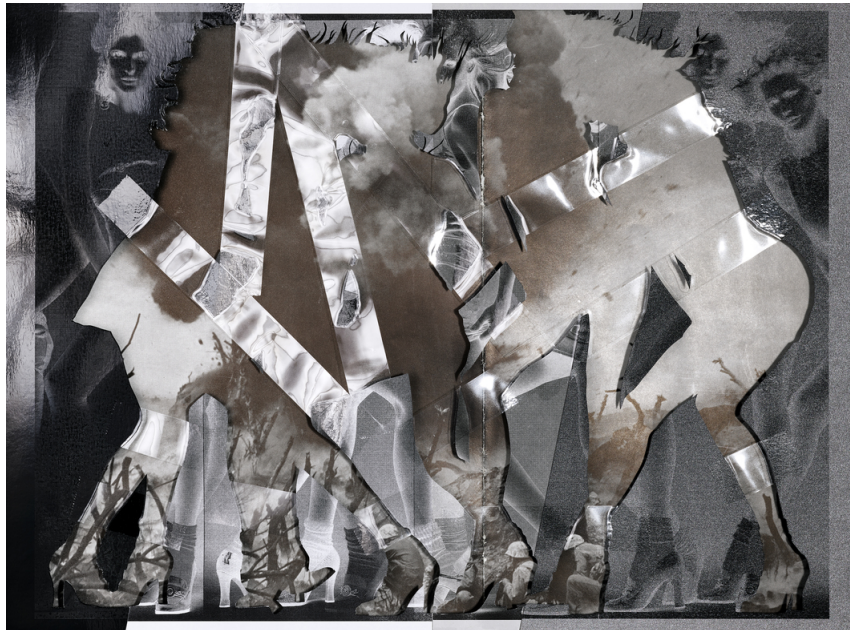


ARTFORUM

Matt Lipps

Written by Gwen Allen

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Matt Lipps, *Blowup*, 2019, ink-jet print, 59 x 80".

Over the past twenty years, Matt Lipps has developed a distinctive photographic collage practice. After cutting out pictures from books and magazines and arranging them, freestanding, into three-dimensional tableaux, he rephotographs them and prints the images at a large scale. In 2016, the artist began to employ the leftover backgrounds of the extracted images as abstract layers that alternately frame and obscure the cutouts. Here, Lipps has pushed this compositional conceit further by superimposing the backdrops—in this case, 1990s fashion advertisements—on a second layer of imagery, black-and-white documentary photographs published in *US Camera Annual* in the '30s through the '60s. The excised figures (iconic supermodels whose spectacular glamour captivated the artist as a teenager, when he was figuring out his own sexuality) thus function simultaneously as silhouettes and apertures.

Visual puns abound in the juxtapositions of different times and places: A setting sun becomes a motorcycle taillight in *Ride* (all works 2019); a mountain range is positioned suggestively at the chest height of four women in *Peaks*. Elsewhere, pictures are abstracted in the Brechtian sense, rendered unfamiliar and seen anew, as in *Blowup*, where a battlefield explosion is partially glimpsed through a crowd of models who are nearly subsumed by the violent imagery they ostensibly frame. Lipps not only unsettles the original meaning of these photographs; he insists that their significance was never fixed but rather established through their circulation and through viewers' conditioned perceptions.

As in Lipps's previous work, the photographs feel as textured as the collages—an effect enhanced by the visible, stylized use of tape. Signifying the literal and conceptual act of joining together disparate images, the tape attests to the ongoing critical potential of radical montage practices—of the Dadaists and Pictures generation alike—even as it points to the outmodedness and aestheticization of such strategies.