

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

ENTER YOUR SEARCH



ROBERT HEINECKEN

2/1/12
 FRIERICH PETZEL
 by *stephen maine*



More than a decade before Douglas Crimp's 1977 "Pictures" identified the appropriationist strategies of a generation, Robert Heinecken (1931–2006) set aside his camera and turned to preexisting media imagery, particularly "the influx of printed promotional material," as he put it in a 1968 statement. Often to sharply satirical effect, he subjected these images to operations - recombination, recontextualization, excision - that deconstructed their medium and subverted their message. The human figure as shown in ads was his leitmotif, but when it came to turning consumerist propaganda on its head, Heinecken's ear for advertising's insidiously bland language was as sharp as his eye.. his recent show - which included 55 pieces, created from 1964 to 1997, the year Alzheimer's arrested Heinecken's career - spanned a wide range of mediums, extending to figurative sculptural works consisting of dry bleach prints on foamcore.

One of his best known works, *Are You Rea* (1964–1968), is a suite of "photographic pictures" made by subjecting pages from glossy magazines to contact printing, a process in which a page is laid on photo paper and exposed to light, causing images from both sides to be recorded on the photograph. Thus superimposed, images and text on recto and verso comment on each other. In one, the head shot of a pouting model is made werewolflike by furry curls from the feather jacket on the reverse. Its caption reads, "The make-up that's Barely There." In another, a woman leers at the camera through her legs; "ad man do it justice," urges the truncated text.

A small selection of altered magazines displayed in vitrines hinted at the lacerating visual poetry Heinecken achieved by excising bits of the pages. In another procedure, he overprinted magazine ads with discordant,

REVIEWS RSS FEED

VIEW ALL FEEDS



Sign up to receive the Art in America Newsletter

YOUR EMAIL



DECODING IMAGES



Joe Fig, Inka Essenhigh, 2005

Currently on view in the group show "Redux" at New York's Cristin Tierney Gallery (through Feb. 4) are two works by Joe Fig, both related to his 200

ALSO

[Stuart Hawkins, Rooftop Garden, 2010](#)

[Eli Hansen, I've Made a Lot of Love Out of This One, 2010](#)

often disturbing images from porn or the news, exercising more control over his double entendres. The 1972 Polaroid *Related to Periodical #5, 2/3* reproduces a cosmetic ad promising "That beautiful new face of yours...free," overlaid with grainy halftone of grinning Vietnamese soldier proudly displaying a pair of severed hears.

The stunning black-and-white film transparency *As Long As You're Up* (1965) takes possession of its source material without intervention. On the left side of a March 1965 Esquire spread, an appeal for foster parents implores "Let he love you..." beside a photo of a filthy, shoeless child standing in a slum. In an ad for Scotch on the facing page, a smartly dressed young writer somewhere in the Highlands, a typewriter in his lap, glances over his shoulder at the girl: as long as you're up, get me a Grant's."

Sixteen works from a 1981 series titled "Lessons in Posing Subjects" combine Polaroid SX-70 snaps of middlebrow clothing catalogues with deadpan instructions for models and stylists on achieving appropriate affect. Standard Pose #6 (Arms Folded) offers dos and don'ts, contrasting subjects who appear relaxed and self-possessed with those appearing defensive, furtive and "overly auto-involved." The artists' earlier work is scathing, but this kinder, gentler Heinecken, whose provocations are as sly and subtle as the mechanisms he critiques, may ultimately have greater staying power.



[CONTACT US](#)

[ADVERTISER INFO](#)

[TERMS OF USE](#)

[PRIVACY](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

[PROMOTIONS](#)



Interviews from the worlds of fashion, film, music, and art. Videos and late-breaking cultural news. [MORE](#)



News and highlights from the world of antiques. Auctions, exhibitions, expertise and distinguished collections. [MORE](#)