

OPEN EYE GALLERY



Lessons in Posing Subjects : Standard Pose #1 (Hands/Neck/Head), 1982 (detail)
SX-70 Polaroid prints mounted on Rives BFK paper, lithographic title and text.
38 x 51 cm. Edition 9/10. The Robert Heinecken Trust

ROBERT HEINECKEN: LESSONS IN POSING SUBJECTS

EXHIBITION PERIOD:

7 November 2014 – 11 January 2015

PRIVATE VIEW:

6 November 2014, 5:30pm – 7:30pm

PREVIEW FOR ACCREDITED PRESS AND PROFESSIONALS:

6 November 2014, 2pm-5pm

**Open Eye Gallery partners Tate Liverpool for a joint launch of their exhibitions
Robert Heinecken: Lessons In Posing Subjects and *Transmitting Andy Warhol***

From 7 November through to 11 January 2015, Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, will present the first UK exhibition dedicated to the artist Robert Heinecken (1931–2006), who is widely regarded as one of America’s most influential post-War photographers and a pioneer of twentieth century photographic experimentation.

Heinecken rarely used a camera, preferring to describe himself as a “para-photographer” because his work stood “beside” or “beyond” traditional ideas associated with photography. Instead he preferred to cut up and rework images found in newsstand and pornographic magazines to create a photo-based satire on American consumerism, the use of sex in selling almost everything to everyone, and the relationship between media and art.

Curated by Devrim Bayar and premiered at WIELS (Brussels), *Robert Heinecken: Lessons in Posing Subjects* examines a pivotal point in Heinecken’s career between 1977 and 1982 when

he was using a Polaroid SX-70 camera. This period came to characterise much of Heinecken's signature work and also coincided with a change of circumstances in the artist's personal life. After a fire destroyed Heinecken's studio and most of his work, he separated from his first wife and soon after met artist Joyce Neimanas whom he later married.

Open Eye Gallery will present over 250 Polaroid photographs by Heinecken, alongside his sketchbooks and magazines cuttings. Included are his first tests using a Polaroid SX-70 camera from the series *He/She*. In *He/She*, Heinecken combined Polaroid snapshots with handwritten fictionalised dialogues between a man and a woman. The portraits, usually of Heinecken and his partner, reveal gender power games and the tone is often sarcastic and sometimes hostile.

To close this series, Open Eye Gallery will present the artist's book: *He/She* (published 1980). Unlike his earlier autobiographic shots, here Heinecken re-photographs staged shoots of models posing in mail order catalogues. These decontextualised images toy with the idea of authenticity whilst successfully conveying a fresh and natural effect.

This same principle returns in his later series *Lessons in Posing Subjects*, which is also shown in the exhibition. Here Heinecken demonstrates his laborious working process: cutting, gluing and re-photographing fragments found in magazines.

Unlike *He/She*, the texts used in *Lessons for Posing Subjects* are typed rather than handwritten, a fact that confers a falsely didactic air to the captions. Seductive and full of humour, Heinecken's 'lessons' are no less provocative and bear witness to the commitment of this controversial artist who described himself "as a bizarre guerrilla, investing in a kind of humorous warfare... without consistent rationale" (1974).

Pornographic magazines also provided Heinecken with a major source of material, as can be seen in the series *The Hite/Hustler Fashion Beaver Hunt* (1981), which will be presented at Open Eye Gallery.

This series: *The Hite/Hustler Fashion Beaver Hunt* takes its name from the pornographic magazine 'Hustler', published by Larry Flint and its offshoot: 'Beaver Hunt', which printed reader submitted porn photos. 'Hite' meanwhile referred to the renowned sexologist Shere Hite, whose studies of female sexuality were published in the 1970s.

With *The Hite/Hustler Fashion Beaver Hunt* Heinecken overlays cut-outs of sexual organs and breasts taken from erotic magazines onto photographs of models posing for lingerie. In so doing, Heinecken demystifies the advertised image by displaying what the pose openly suggests but is hidden by clothing. On top of this, Heinecken then adds layer of dialogue in the form of text taken from letters supposedly sent to porn magazines by their readers.

Throughout his long career, from the early 1960s to late 1990s, Heinecken's prolific oeuvre shows an obsessive, prescient eye that captured the vagaries of American popular culture, consumerism and gender in an unique and compelling way.

Robert Heinecken: Lessons in Posing Subjects at Open Eye Gallery is kindly supported by Cherry and Martin Pretzel; Marc Selwyn Fine Arts and Rhona Hoffman. The exhibition is curated by Devrim Bayar and will travel to Fri Art – Kunsthalle Fribourg, Switzerland, after its presentation at Open Eye Gallery.

Biography

Robert Heinecken's work has been presented in over sixty solo exhibitions. In 2014, the Museum of Modern Art, New York staged a major retrospective that is now on view at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles until January 2015. Recent group exhibitions include: *The Photographic Object 1970*, at Le Consortium, Dijon, 2013; *The Shaping of New Visions: Photography, Film, Photobook*, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2013; *Sinister Pop*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2012; *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974–1981*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2012.

Robert Heinecken was born on December 29, 1931, in Denver, USA. His father was a Lutheran Minister who moved the family to Riverside, California, in 1942. Heinecken entered UCLA in 1951 but did not graduate until 1959, after serving in the U.S. Marine Corps for four years as a fighter pilot. Heinecken married Janet M. Storey in 1955 (they divorced in 1980) and finished graduate school at UCLA in 1960, where he took a position on the art department faculty. He launched the photography programme in 1962 during his 31-year stint at UCLA. The artist later married Joyce Neimanas, an instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Open Eye Gallery

Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, is one of the UK's leading photography spaces. Under the direction of Lorenzo Fusi, the gallery presents four main exhibitions per year and runs a rich programme of public events. Open Eye houses a collection of 1650 photographic prints in its archive.

Editors Notes:

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Gallery Opening Hours:

10.30am - 5.30pm

Tuesday to Sunday during exhibitions.

Closed on Mondays (except bank holidays) and during exhibition changeovers.

Image credit/caption:

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