



Matt Lipps

MARC SELWYN FINE ART

Ansel Adams's 1933 photograph *Storeroom, M. H. de Young Museum, San Francisco*, depicts an unruly crowd in the institution's storage vault: smiling kouroi, draped Venuses, and other ancient statuary with legs and arms akimbo. Rather than to justly capture sculptural volume, Adams's viewpoint from within the melee seems designed to obscure spatial relations and render three-dimensional form startlingly flat. It is this same curious effect that Matt Lipps sought to achieve in his latest series of staged photographs, "HORIZON/S," 2010–.

Since 2002, Lipps has been developing a unique mode of photomontage in which appropriated imagery is cut out of magazines, propped up, arranged in real space, and rephotographed, essentially returned to a two-dimensional state. With "HORIZON/S," large diorama-style groupings set against minimal backdrops provide the most succinct and transparent display of the artist's process yet. Acid lights cast dazzling colored shadows from foreground cutouts onto their neighbors,



Matt Lipps, *Untitled (Architecture)*, 2010, color photograph, 53 x 40". From the series "HORIZON/S," 2010.

images as source material for typological dioramas organized according to degrees zero of classification: sculpture, architecture, men, women, etc. For example, *Untitled (Women's Heads)* features a phalanx of female gazes radiating out, fanlike, and the two-panel *Untitled (Sculpture)* shows a throng of sculptures ancient and modern, figurative and abstract, from East and West. However, lest his categories (however broad) remain airtight, Lipps subtly undermines them by slipping in imposters: the suited man barely visible behind an oversize cathedral ornament in *Untitled (Architecture)*, or, conversely, the erect modernist tower nestled amid the suited men in *Untitled (Men in Suits)*. The most compelling works obey an order that is not immediately identifiable. In *Untitled (Twelve)*, a cluster of horses (including a Trojan horse) and various women appear sensual and heroic, suggesting—without clearly explaining—a symbolic contiguity between women, equines, and conquest.

What is perhaps the chef d'oeuvre of the series, *Untitled (Archive)*, employs the most generous rule of classification. The six-panel photograph depicts a friezelike procession of all of Lipps's figurines positioned along a shelf, organized left to right in a gradual crescendo of color. Visual repetitions from one panel to the next introduce a stuttering effect that, analogous to the work's spatial warping, indexes distortions of time. Lipps's images are theatrical sets that critically demonstrate the ease with which collectors (both institutional and individual) play games with history by rearranging its characters. Indeed, the pictures propose an analogy between the acquisitive, controlling desires of the collector and photography's imposition of flatness onto reality, which forces upon its subjects a unidirectional appearance for the visual gratification of the beholder (a kind of facingness that is nothing like that of painted figures). Furthermore, Lipps's method of spatial montage connects the photograph's imposed frontality to sculpture's theatrical address. Such a link offers a clue as to why we might productively think about Lipps's work alongside that of sculptors who use photography (e.g., Rachel Harrison) and what may be the motivations behind the resurgence of practices, first introduced in the 1970s, that bring together photography and sculpture. We are witnessing a studied exploration of the ways in which we are faced with and addressed by images and objects alike.

—Natilee Harren

compounding the spatial confusion. In *Untitled (White)* (all works cited, 2010), shades of yellow and blue embellish an all-white composition of statues, portraits, and architecture. The shadows signal the existence of recessional space at the same time that they work illusionistically as a visual glue to bind and flatten the figures into a singular plane.

Though much of Lipps's previous work has centered on gay male desire, "HORIZON/S" engages the desires associated with the broader realm of humanist inquiry—as is visible in the pages of the now-defunct luxury art and cultural history magazine *Horizon*. Encyclopedic in scope, *Horizon* was a magazine in the original sense of that word—like the subject of Adams's photograph, a storeroom—and Lipps utilized its contents liberally for this series. Mining the pages of issues from the late 1950s and '60s, he clipped out