

Experimental Photography Docent Lecture

11/21/2023

Notes - Sharrissa Iqbal

MY MOTHER ALWAYS SAID, 'THE BEST PHOTOGRAPHERS, THE BEST ARTISTS DO IT ALONE.' IT'S A VERY, VERY TRUE STATEMENT. IF YOU WANT TO BE GREAT AT SOMETHING, YOU NEED TO DO IT ALONE

I WANT TO CALL HER A PIONEER BECAUSE MY MOTHER WAS ONE OF THE FIRST BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPHERS THAT STARTED PAINTING AND CREATING OVERLAYS TO HER PHOTOGRAPHS...

-Susan Archibald

KALI

BALDESSARI

MUYBRIDGE

CUNNINGHAM

HEINEKEN

Baldessari

Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts), 1973

For this work, Baldessari threw three balls at once, trying to line them up in midair, while his then-wife, Carol Wixom, took pictures. Although he endeavored to make each attempt identical, no two photographs are the same due to unavoidable differences in his technique and uncontrollable variables such as changes in wind speed. Baldessari made thirty-six attempts—the number of exposures on a standard 35 mm film roll—and chose the twelve shots he considered most successful. Through this process, he

documented the unbridgeable divide between the conception of an artistic idea and its execution, which is inevitably affected by the vagaries of chance.

Muybridge

first scientific study to incorporate photography,

1880s, he worked at the University of Pennsylvania and produced over 100,000 images of animals and humans in motion, capturing movement otherwise indistinguishable to the human eye. Muybridge laid the groundwork for the motion picture industry, thereby revealing a new universe of motion. He combined his artistic vision in photography with scientific analysis to achieve widespread cultural recognition that is continued by Hollywood films today.

Imogen Cunningham

Trained as a chemist at the University of Washington, Cunningham also went on to a grant-funded sojourn in Dresden, Germany, where she published a thesis on the platinum printing process

Within her seven-decade photographic career, Imogen Cunningham is perhaps best known for her work in the 1920s and 1930s: close, clear, abstract images of organic forms, particularly botanical specimens.

Cunningham joined fellow California photographers in forming Group f/64, named after the aperture on a view camera that generated a maximally sharp image across the full depth of field. California photographers who promoted a style of sharply detailed, purist photography. The group, formed in 1932, constituted a revolt against Pictorialism, the soft-focused, academic photography that was then prevalent among West Coast artists

-broader reaction in art photography against the romanticism of pictorialist photography

Whereas this print features even tones on a matte-finish paper, subsequent prints of the image appear on the glossy, high-contrast paper favored by f/64 members.

Robert Heinecken

Robert Heinecken is widely recognized for his alternative approaches and processes that challenged and expanded traditional notions of the photographic medium. Heinecken, the founder of UCLA's photography program, rarely used a camera, instead drawing on appropriated imagery from magazines and newspapers, and employing techniques like lithography, etching, camera-less exposure and photo emulsion on canvas.

Heinecken's conceptual approach drew from mass media like newspapers and magazines. In his photograms, Robert Heinecken projected light through a magazine page to superimpose images from both sides at once, exploiting random combinations to excavate cultural meaning and exposing the constructed nature of desire in advertising.

socially important manufactured experiences which are being created daily by the mass media

André Breton at length ("Everything, in effect *is an image* . .

"documentarian" of "manufactured experience." His is an eye that reveals, that describes experience not as given or spontaneous but as preconditioned and fabricated, and that sees contemporary existence as a process of consumption.

Robert Heinecken dedicated his life to making art and teaching, establishing the photography program at UCLA in 1964 and serving as a professor there until 1991. He came of age artistically in 1960s Los Angeles, where the burgeoning art scene and proximity to Hollywood provided fertile ground for experimentation. In this environment Heinecken—alongside peers making Pop art and Conceptual art—pushed the boundaries between mediums and between high and popular culture.

"Once you open the shutter of a camera you have made the first manipulative step away from the real,"

Heinecken described himself as a “para-photographer” because his work stood “beside” or “beyond” traditional notions of the medium. He extended photographic processes and materials into lithography, collage, photo-based painting and sculpture, and installation. Drawing on the countless pictures in magazines, books, pornography, television, and even consumer items such as TV dinners, Heinecken used found images to explore the manufacture of daily life by mass media and the relationship between the original and the copy, both in art and in our culture at large. Thriving on contradictions, friction, and disparity, his examination of American attitudes toward gender, sex, and violence was often humorous and always provocative.