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**The Hammer Museum presents *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter*  
Major retrospective of innovative Los Angeles photographer  
On view October 3, 2014 – January 18, 2015**



Los Angeles—The Hammer Museum presents *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter*, the first retrospective of the work of Robert Heinecken since his death in 2006. The exhibition covers four decades of the artist’s remarkable practice, from the early 1960s through the late 1990s. Describing himself as a “para-photographer,” because his work stood “beside” or “beyond” traditional ideas associated with photography, Heinecken was a self-taught photographer and pioneer in the postwar Los Angeles art scene. He worked across multiple mediums, including photography, sculpture, video, printmaking, and collage. Culling images from newspapers, magazines, pornography, and television, he recontextualized them through collage and assemblage, double-sided photograms, darkroom experimentation, and rephotography. Although Heinecken was rarely behind the lens of a camera, his photo-based works question the nature of photography and radically redefine the perception of it as an artistic medium. His works explore themes of commercialism, Americana, kitsch, sex, the body, and gender. In doing so, they also expose his obsession with popular culture and its effects on society, and with the relationship between the original and the copy. Organized by Eva Respini, curator, with Drew Sawyer, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow, department of photography, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter* will be on view October 3, 2014 – January 18, 2015. The Hammer’s presentation is organized by Cynthia Burlingham, deputy director, curatorial affairs, with Leslie Cozzi, curatorial associate, Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts.

Heinecken dedicated his life not only to making art but also teaching, establishing the photography program at UCLA in 1963, where he taught until 1991. "This survey exhibition is a homecoming for an artist and professor whose experimental approach had a profound influence on many Southern California artists, including a generation of students who went on to become major artists themselves," remarks Cynthia Burlingham. "In the late 1960s, Heinecken was responsible for starting the photography collection at UCLA that now belongs to the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, which makes this exhibition especially meaningful for us."

Heinecken began making photographs in the early 1960s. The antithesis of the fine-print tradition exemplified by West Coast photographers Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, who photographed landscapes and objects in sharp focus and with objective clarity, Heinecken's early work is marked by high contrast, blur, and under- or overexposure, as seen in *Shadow Figure* (1962) and *Strip of Light* (1964). In the mid-1960s he began combining and sequencing disparate pictures, as in *Visual Poem/About the Sexual Education of a Young Girl* (1965). The female nude is a recurring motif in many works, including a group of three-dimensional sculptures and puzzles made from photographs mounted onto individual blocks. In *Fractured Figure Sections* (1967), a tower of interlocking fragments that rotate around a central axis, the female figure is never resolved as a single image—the body is always truncated, never contiguous. In contrast, a complete female figure can be reconstituted in his largest photo-object, *Transitional Figure Sculpture* (1965), an immense 26-layer octagon composed from photographs of a nude that have been altered using various printing techniques.

Heinecken's groundbreaking suite *Are You Rea* (1964–68) is a series of 25 double-sided photograms made directly from more than 2000 magazine pages drawn from publications such as *Life*, *Time*, and *Woman's Day*. Representative of a culture that was increasingly commercialized, technologically mediated, and suspicious of established truths, *Are You Rea* cemented Heinecken's interest in the multiplicity of meanings inherent in existing images and situations. Continuing his work with magazines, in 1969 Heinecken began a series of manipulated periodicals titled *MANSMAG: Homage to Werkman and Cavalcade*. He used the erotic men's magazine *Cavalcade* as source material, making plates of every page, and randomly printing and over-printing them on pages that were then scrambled and reassembled into a new magazine. He continued to produce and surreptitiously circulate various "revised" or "compromised" periodicals well into the 1990s.

Heinecken used a wide range of other materials to explore different kinds of juxtapositions. In *Kodak Safety Film/Christmas Mistake* (1971), he used transparent film to superimpose pornographic images on a Christmas snapshot of his children. The work's title suggested that somehow two rolls of film were mixed up at the photo lab. In *Figure Horizon #1* (1971), he applied photographic emulsion to canvas to create a hybrid photographic painting depicting impossible undulating landscapes composed of sequenced images of the nude female body. In the mid-1970s Heinecken experimented with new materials introduced by Polaroid—specifically the SX-70 camera (which required no darkroom or technical know-how)—eventually producing the series *Lessons in Posing Subjects* in the early 1980s. He also created large-scale sculptural installations, the earliest of which is *TV/Time Environment* (1970), addressing the increasingly dominant presence of television in American culture. Heinecken continued his work with television, most notably in *A Case Study in Finding an Appropriate TV Newswoman (A CBS Docudrama in Words and Pictures)* (1984),

Heinecken's landmark photographic satire of Reagan-era television journalism that was recently acquired by the Hammer.

Although Heinecken was prolific, *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter* is a focused presentation of his major works, emphasizing early experiments that investigated technique and materiality and sought to destabilize the very definition of photography. Heinecken's eclectic and irreverent body of work transformed American photography from an instrument of documentary reportage to a tool for the interrogation and deconstruction of social norms. His innovative and diverse experimentation resonates deeply with current artistic practice, and his prescient exploration of the definition of photography, the possibilities of appropriation, and the limitations of artistic categories is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.

## CATALOGUE

The accompanying publication *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter* by Eva Respini is the most complete survey of the artist's oeuvre. Respini's essay sets his work in the context of twentieth-century photographic experimentation and conceptual art; an illustrated essay about his experimental techniques by conservator Jennifer Jae Gutierrez contributes to the sparse scholarship on Heinecken's working methods. A selection of Heinecken's eloquent writings on art and photography foregrounds the artist's voice in the reading of his work today.

188 pages; 300 illustrations. Hardcover, \$50. Available from MoMA stores and online at [MoMAstore.org](http://MoMAstore.org). Distributed to the trade by ARTBOOK | D.A.P. in the United States and Canada. Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames & Hudson.

## RELATED PROGRAMS

### Exhibition Tours

Sunday, October 12, 2pm & 2:45pm

Cynthia Burlingham, deputy director of curatorial affairs, and Leslie Cozzi, curatorial associate, lead two walkthroughs of this exhibition.

### *Heinecken Explains Heinecken* Screening

Tuesday, November 4, 7:30pm

Using one of Robert Heinecken's lectures from 1988 as a framework, this film interweaves the artist's voice with images of his work, creating a portrait of the legendary artist and teacher in his own words. This satisfying document of a pioneer in the postwar L.A. art scene perfectly captures Heinecken's political and aesthetic concerns and understated humor. (2011, Dir. P. Savernick, 45 min.)

### *Heinecken and Feminism* Panel

Tuesday, December 9, 7:30pm

Heralded as a feminist and denounced as misogynist, Robert Heinecken is a complex figure whose art raises urgent questions about the representation of women in a media saturated world. His use of found pornographic materials and images of female bodies taken from magazines, newspapers, and other found sources was, and still is, hotly debated among artists, scholars, and curators. This panel, held in conjunction with the exhibition *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter*, will explore the various ways in which Heinecken's work has been read, and continues to be relevant, in the

dialogue about representations of women and gender in art. **Eva Respini**, curator, Department of Photography, MoMA, moderates the panel discussion with **A. L. Steiner**, artist and visiting assistant professor and MFA program director at USC; **Luke Batten**, director, Robert Heinecken Trust; **Richard Meyer**, Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor in Art History, Stanford University; and **Rebecca Morse**, associate curator, Wallis Annenberg Photography Department, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

#### **CREDIT**

*Robert Heinecken: Object Matter* is organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Special thanks to the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, which houses the Robert Heinecken Archive, and The Robert Heinecken Trust. The exhibition is organized by Eva Respini, curator, with Drew Sawyer, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow, department of photography, The Museum of Modern Art. The Hammer's presentation is organized by Cynthia Burlingham, deputy director, curatorial affairs, with Leslie Cozzi, curatorial associate, Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts.

The Hammer Museum's presentation of *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter* is made possible with major support from Alice and Nahum Lainer.

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#### **ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM**

The Hammer Museum—a public arts unit of the University of California, Los Angeles—is dedicated to exploring the diversity of artistic expression through the ages. Its collections, exhibitions, and programs span the classic to the cutting-edge in art, architecture, and design, recognizing that artists play a crucial role in all aspects of culture and society.

The museum houses the Armand Hammer Collection of old master, impressionist, and postimpressionist paintings and the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection. The museum also houses the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts—comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present—and oversees the management of the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden on the UCLA campus. The Hammer's newest collection, the Hammer Contemporary Collection, is highlighted by works by artists such as Lari Pittman, Kara Walker, Ed Ruscha, Barbara Kruger, Mark Bradford, Richard Hawkins, and Llyn Foulkes, among many others.

The Hammer presents major single-artist and thematic exhibitions of historical and contemporary art. It also presents approximately ten Hammer Projects exhibitions each year, providing international and local artists with a laboratory-like environment to create new work or to present existing work in a new context.

As a cultural center, the Hammer offers a diverse array of free public programs throughout the year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances. These widely acclaimed public programs are presented in the Hammer's Billy Wilder Theater, which is also the home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's renowned cinemathèque.

#### **HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION**

Visit [www.hammer.ucla.edu](http://www.hammer.ucla.edu) or call **310-443-7000** for current exhibition and program information.

**ADMISSION TO ALL EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.**

**Hours:** Tuesday–Friday 11am–8pm; Saturday & Sunday 11am–5pm. Closed Mondays, July 4, Thanksgiving, December 24, 25, 31, and January 1.

**Location/Parking:** The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood Village, three blocks east of the 405 Freeway's Wilshire exit. Parking is available under the Museum. Rate is \$3 for three hours with Museum validation. Bicycles park free and the Hammer is easily accessible via [public transportation](#).

**Tours:** For group tour reservations and information, call 310-443-7041.