

One Wall One Work:

Allen Ruppersberg

“The Top Ten Historical Similarities (and Differences) Between Prints and Photographs”

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“I’m basically a pulp artist. As popular culture grows and at times threatens to overwhelm everything, I think any artist is aware of his relationship to it. At the same time, I also believe art is not popular culture or entertainment.”

Allen Ruppersberg

The latest in the ongoing series of “One Wall, One Work”, Allen Ruppersberg presents “The Top Ten Historical Similarities (and Differences) Between Prints and Photographs”, a suite of 10 digital photographs with lithographic and hand-applied overlays.

Each of the ten pieces begins with an image taken from the artist’s deep and vast archive of pop and pulp culture. He then adds two or three more elements (hand coloring, text and/or lithography) to each image. Through the grouping of the ten together, one can see that he utilized various printing techniques (from the ever so simple to the highly technical) as well as the ‘old fashioned’ technique of coloring by hand elements of several of the photos. These technique juxtapositions are given ‘narratives’ by being captioned by various texts. The sentences that Ruppersberg adds directly engage the relationship between photography and prints (as stated in the title of the work). The approaches range from the factual, to the subjective and, all the way, to a first person narrative of the artist. One of Ruppersberg’s primary interests is the blurring of the roles between artist and viewer, along with ways to reposition the audience so as to bring it more in line with the action of the artist. By combining the easily legible, the mysterious, the technical and the humorous, “The Top Ten Historical Similarities (and Differences) Between Prints and Photographs” creates a blurred line between the collector, author, artist and viewer.

Allan McCollum has described Ruppersberg’s work as “a love letter to the ephemeral and to

memory, a valorization of the things that are destined to disappear”.

Ruppersberg was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and graduated from the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles in 1967. He began as a painter but quickly abandoned oil and canvas in favor of projects that were about language, pictures, books, and ideas. His love for images and texts led him to gather thousands of books, postcards, photographs, magazines, slides, posters, and a large collections of industrial and educational films from 1931-1967. For an artist interested in the cultural mythologies, narratives, and common truths of everyday life, this collection of materials, featuring mostly items from American popular culture of the mid 20th century, has frequently served as fertile source material in his work.

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