

UAM CSULB NEWS

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PASADENA ARTIST STEPHEN BERKMAN AT UAM

Long Beach, CA — (August 21, 2007) — The University Art Museum is pleased to present *Stephen Berkman: Quadrascope*, September 6 – October 14, 2007. A reception for the artist will be held on September 6th from 6 to 8 pm. Through his glass plate ambrotypes and installations, it appears that photographer Stephen Berkman has traveled back in time to the 19th century. A clever illusionist, Berkman uses the wet collodian process, popular from the 1850s to the 1880s to stage images, which while rooted in the past, also refer to the conceits of the 21st century. Using four lenses, light, a moth, and screens Berkman illustrates how an image is refracted or captured through a camera. The result is a magical, lyrical display that would have delighted viewers in the 19th century as it delights audiences today. Lyle Rexer states in his book *Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde*:

"Stephen Berkman finds in the ambrotype an opportunity for theatrical fabrication, with history itself as a collaborator. Berkman uses collodion to anchor implausibility and give unreality a historical patina. He stages elaborate tableaux with nineteenth-century characters performing for some obscure purpose".

Berkman's installation work explores the era of pre-chemical photography both literally and philosophically. While his constructions encompass optical projections and sculptural reinterpretations of the camera obscura, his body of work as a whole examines the intrinsic nature of photography during this nascent period when it was possible to create fleeting images, but impossible to fix them into permanent photographs. This search to rediscover the ephemeral nature of pre-photographic history, the scientific interplay of light and optics, and the quest for optical amusements, also known as philosophical instruments are uniquely considered throughout Berkman's work. A few of the installation projects that employ the camera obscura principle include "Surveillance Obscura", "The Obscura Object", "Quadrascope", and "Looking Glass", which is perhaps the worlds first transparent camera obscura. Considering the implications of this camera obscura in her 2006 review in the *L.A. Times*, Leah Ollman stated: "*In a dark, curtained-off space in the center of the gallery stands one of the show's most captivating works and one that reveals, with literal transparency, how the medium of photography itself blurs the boundaries between science, art and magic.*"



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Stephen Berkman was born in Syracuse New York, but is now based in Pasadena, California. Currently a member of the film faculty at Art Center College of Design, Berkman received the Great Teacher Award in 1996 and again in 2003. Berkman's film work has screened in both national and international film festivals. In 2001, 2002 and 2003, Stephen received an Artist Fellowship Grant from the Pasadena Cultural Affairs Division, and in 1999, and 2004 he received an Art Center College of Design Faculty Enrichment Grant. Berkman served for six years on the board of directors of the Pasadena based arts group AKA New Town. In 2000, he was a visiting artist at the J. Paul Getty Museum. Other projects

with the Getty include "Artist Point of View Talks" to accompany the exhibits *Voyages and Visions*, and *Julia Margaret Cameron Photographer*. He is also the creator of educational video detailing the wet-collodion process for the Getty website, and art information room. Berkman's photographs have been featured in the book *Photography's Antiquarian Avant- Garde, The New Wave in Old Processes* (Abrams Publisher, 2002). Other publications include *Blind Spot, Art in America, i-D, magazine*, and the book *The Journal of Contemporary Photography: Strange Genius*. In 2002 Berkman was commissioned to create photographic tintypes in Romania for Oscar winning director Anthony Minghella's feature film *Cold Mountain*. *Stephen Berkman: Cold Mountain and Other Journeys* was exhibited at the Museum of Photographic Arts, along with Berkman's series *From Memory*. Stephen Berkman holds a B.F.A. in film from Art Center College of Design.

Related Events:

Artist Reception
UAM@noon

September , 6-8 PM

September 11, 12:15-1 PM

Gallery talk with Stephen Berkman

Also on view at the UAM:

Thomas Woodruff's Freak Parade September 6 – October 14, 2007

Thomas Woodruff's FREAK PARADE is an ambitiously dazzling cycle of images that is a celebration of the beauty of aberrance. The parade's hapless yet noble characters march gaily across a black expanse, each member of Woodruff's wild imagistic imagination on a different panel. Woodruff, a former tattoo artist, uses an incredible range of techniques, and emotions in his artwork. Beyond their fanatical visual complexity and impact, these creations embody the metaphysical sense of what it means to be a "freak" -- those who by circumstances of birth or choice are outside of the norm, vikified, misunderstood, feared, and demonized. The strange hybrids that appear in these paintings parade their elaborate beauty and dignity with a vengeance, celebrating the essential right to be different. They are all rendered in loving detail and delicately embellished with tiny rhinestones.