

WESTERN ★ PROJECT

For immediate release:

Arne Svenson

The Library : Books and prints

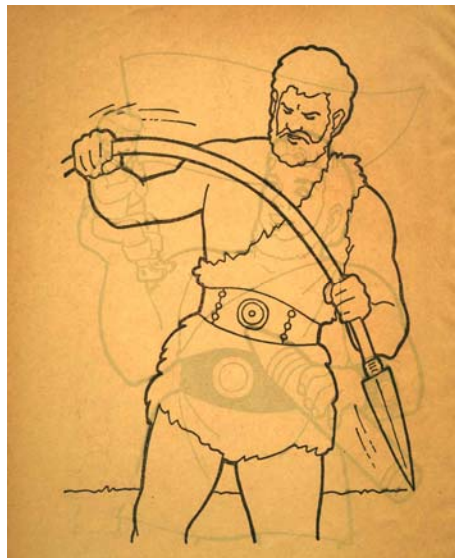
May 22 – June 26, 2010

**Opening reception
Saturday May 22, 6 – 8pm**



Western Project is proud to present ***The Library***, a body of new work by New York artist/photographer, Arne Svenson. For his seventh solo exhibition in Los Angeles, Svenson will present books and prints scanned from his idiosyncratic collections of newspaper clippings, magazine photos, paper towels, found diaries and books from his youth. The function of ***The Library*** is to create unexpected connections and narratives. The artist writes:

“Using disparate images taken from appropriated institutional, educational and non-fiction printed material, the pages of the 6 books in the exhibition suggest tales to be told, stories within stories. The narrative may be literal, as in the (self) reportage of *Diane's Diary*, or, in the case of *Heroes*, created by random juxtaposition and pagination decisions. In the *Real Estate Ladies*, the story could be the subtext behind the 400 smiling faces of eager Agents. The stories are up to the viewer to create - I have provided the raw material, with a prompt here and there, but the rest is up to the reader of these books.”



The bound artist books are oversized, approximately two by three feet and contain anywhere from 55 to over 200 pages. The images are not manipulated (i.e., no Photoshop), only enlarged. The installation is designed for leisurely reading; the books lay open on a carpeted floor with gloves and a sitting pillow. The six titles are:

**Heroes,
Diane's Diary,
Language Development Level #1,
Paper Towels,
Real Estate Ladies,
The Transformative Power of Bad Registration in
The New York Times.**

Regarding the ***The Transformative Power of Bad Registration in The New York Times***, the artist writes:

“Every so often a photograph will be misprinted in *The New York Times*. The errors can be subtle or glaring; they can range from a slight shift of color to a complete re-arrangement of the dot-pattern, which creates the image. My interest in this phenomenon is how an unintentional misstep distorts the intentionality of the photographer, editor, etc. - how a misprint can rearrange truth and reality. Eyes slip down the face, limbs are extended, and laughter becomes tears all because somewhere a machine failed. The unintended shift of color and form change the story, the meaning of the photograph, and open it up to a wealth of additional interpretations.”

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As pictures inspire stories, so do paper towels:

"While I was shopping at the Price Chopper grocery store I came across two women in the paper-goods aisle discussing art in some depth. They were going back and forth about color and form and how specific "pictures" made them feel. Curious, I looked over to see them holding rolls of paper towels and realized that they were deciding which printed pattern towel would be the best choice for their kitchen....

Rather than avoiding them for white, I began collecting illustrated paper towel sheets a few years ago. Ubiquitous in most homes, I was astounded by the cynical nostalgia of the designs - a cloying cuteness presumably put forth to comfort and sustain the paper towel user as he/she mopped up a mess. Because of this dichotomy, I realized that the whole idea of choosing a paper towel for the image is more complex than I first thought. Maybe the women in the Price Chopper were right, perhaps it is art..."



Using the images from paper towels as large prints, Svenson points to traditional Japanese scrolls, abstract and landscape painting in a minimalist language. The prints are large, up to ten feet long. Whether it is a café scene or giant frogs, the towel images suggest the surreal sensibility of Max Ernst and the pragmatic writing Gertrude Stein, turned: a towel is a towel is a towel – endless viewpoints and possibilities in its being-ness.



In *Diane's Diary*, Svenson uproots the familiar and reorients the history of a found object:

"In 2001 I bought a small, 4" x 3'5" diary from a thrift store in Las Vegas. On the first page is the notation: "Championship Wrestling Autographs by Superstars..". The next page is dated, by hand, "8/15/83" and is the beginning page of a personal diary. The entries last for thirteen pages and represent only the two hand-written dates "8/15/83" and "12/27/83" - the printed calendar dates in the diary have no bearing on the actual dates of the entries.

Diane, the author of the diary, relates to it as a friend, closing some of her entries with "...see you later", or "...til next time". She outlines her troubles with her former boyfriend Steve, her delight with new boyfriend Doug, her day in court with friend Linda, and, in the last, and only, entry on 12/27/83, her growing sense of unease with Doug. The diary ends in an ominous manner, highlighting what, in a few short pages, appears to be a very troubled life. I included Diane's Diary in this series because I wanted a literal, though anonymous and ambiguous, story amongst the subjective visual fictions of the other books. And I produced it large because I wanted her story to be more visually heroic in proportion."

Like his earlier *Sock Monkey* pictures, Svenson approaches his subjects in a flat footed manner, allowing the viewer to engage on numerous levels; all is what it seems, and not necessarily as it appears. It is a generosity peculiar to mature artists. By choosing a scanner instead of a camera, he mirrors a Warholian mass production sensibility but without a cynical twist. He is fascinated by the ordinary and finds revelation in its many manifestations.. What is overlooked can be profound and what is profound can suffer bad registration – either way, there is a lesson in it.

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Svenson's work is in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Mutter Museum in Philadelphia, among others. He is currently in the exhibition *Ni Una Mas*, at Drexel University, Philadelphia. His books include, ***Unspeakable Likeness*** (2010), ***Mrs. Ballard's Parrots*** (2005), ***Prisoners*** (1997), ***Sock Monkeys (200 out of 1,863)*** (2003), and as well as photos from the Mutter Museum of Pathology, and Las Vegas, Nevada. He is the recipient of the 2008 Nancy Graves Foundation grant, and the 2005 James D. Phelan Art Award in Photography.

For information and images, contact the gallery at cliff@western-project.com or erin@western-project.com