

Joey Terrill

Joey Terrill: Self-Portraits, Clones, Icons, and Homages, 1980-1993

March 19 – April 23, 2022

Los Angeles

Park View / Paul Soto are very proud to announce *Joey Terrill: Self-Portraits, Clones, Icons, and Homages, 1980 – 1993*, an exhibition of historical works by the Los Angeles-based artist Joey Terrill (b. 1955), his first with the gallery, and his first in Los Angeles since a survey exhibition at the ONE Archives in 2013. An opening reception will be held on Saturday March 19 from 2 to 5pm for the artist, and the exhibition will be on view at our gallery location in Los Angeles until Saturday, April 23.

Raised in Highland Park / East Los Angeles, Terrill's early interest in art drew inspiration from popular culture of the 1950s and '60s, specifically cartoons, comics, images from magazines, television, film, as well as current artistic trends. In the 1970s Terrill attended Immaculate Heart College, where his work was greatly influenced by the American Pop Art movement via the philosophy of Sister Corita Kent, whose graphic silkscreen works still resonated within the art department that she helped to create. As a member of a large body of queer artists who were members of the Los Angeles gay and lesbian movement at that time, Terrill merged his artistic practice with Chicana/o social justice efforts, creating a unique body of works that span the media of painting, drawing, zine making, photography and collage. For well over forty years, Terrill has explored ideas about *Chicanismo* from a gay perspective, pushing back on traditional modes of cultural representation via the exploration of the dual identities of being both Chicano and gay. Terrill's influences span a wide range—from photographs by Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden to Andy Warhol silkscreens, from Mexican 19th and 20th century paintings to images by *ASCO*—his iconography is a reflection of his life and history.

The exhibition comprises 11 paintings by the artist. Anchoring the front room are two major works from Terrill's Public Art series. First exhibited at the James Turcotte Gallery in 1986, these multi-panel acrylic-on-canvas paintings contain public artworks sited throughout Southern California: Isamu Noguchi's *California Scenario* in Costa Mesa; and Mark di Suvero and Bruce Nauman works among others located within the plaza of the Wells Fargo Building in Downtown Los Angeles. In the center of these multi-panel grids is Terrill himself. Montage-like and reminiscent of both cinema and comic books, the works illustrate a narrative in which Terrill is the lead actor, where in these public art spaces the public is himself. Exploring the world around him with every image, Terrill navigates the landscapes in which he has lived depicting himself within spaces that have historically pushed people like him—Chicano and homosexual—to the margins. Just as public artworks insert themselves into municipal public space or corporate architecture, Terrill asserts his belonging to the city of Los Angeles, to the world. In images like these, Terrill uses painting as an act of self-assertion, depicting himself and his brown queer community as a call for acknowledgement and representation within American image culture at large.

When his community was confronted with the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Terrill naturally started to create works that reflected the devastation that it had on those around him, becoming a rallying point for advocacy. To counteract public vilification of the queer community these works often took the form of images that not only celebrated queer love, but memorialized a community that was battling to survive. Many of Terrill's subjects are his friends and lovers. His figures lounge, watch TV, walk, pose, and come together, relishing feelings of closeness. According to Terrill, "I was interested in portraying something romantic between gay men as opposed to the hyper-sexualized masculinity that

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dominated images of homosexuality during the period.” In works like *Phillip Littell in Elysian Park* and *Chris Miller on Melrose Ave.* (both 1984), Terrill documents male friendships via images that capture passing moments, elevating each man to the status of celebrity. His works also sometimes take on a humorous commentary on gay male culture, as in *Will Rogers State Beach* (1980), an example from his “Clones” series in which the artist both documents and pokes fun at the phenomenon that was the embrace of traditional masculine stereotypes that included mustaches, chiseled gym bodies, tight clothes, and uniforms among others.

Terrill’s images also contain a sense of whimsy, as evident in his collage works. In *It Makes Me Think You Don’t Like Me or Something* (1988), Terrill paints himself as a cool guy outfitted in jeans and a white tee, in a “the Fonz”-like pose, over collaged newspaper clippings filled with anti-gay content. In this work Terrill challenges the societal homophobia that permeates all sectors of society from the church, to politics, to civil rights, indicating that he is ready to take on the fight. Also on view is his major collage work, *My First Crush* (1993), which began as an homage to his First Grade crush. Using his first crush as a starting point for the realization of his gay identity, it expands and circles out to include both pop culture icons to classmates and boyfriends reflecting his male gaze onto the larger male world. With an intimate quality of a teenager writing in his or her diary, this work exposes Terrill’s all-encompassing relationships to men since childhood, including his idols The Beatles, ex-boyfriends, Matt Dillon, Montgomery Clift, his friend Joey Arias, Antonio Banderas, and many other men Terrill has loved over the years, both platonic and not.

Joey Terrill (b. 1955) lives and works in Los Angeles, California. His solo exhibitions include *Once Upon A Time: Paintings 1981 - 2015*, Ortuzar Projects, New York (2021); *Just What is it That Makes Today’s Homos So Different, So Appealing?*, ONE Gallery, West Hollywood (2013); *Chico Moderno*, Norris Fine Art Gallery, Los Angeles (1993); and *Chicanos Invade New York*, Windows on White Street, New York (1981). His work has featured in the institutional surveys *ESTAMOS BIEN—La Trienal 20/21*, El Museo Del Barrio, New York (2020–21); *Touching History: Stonewall 50*, Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs (2019); *Through Positive Eyes*, Fowler Museum, University of California, Los Angeles (2019); *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.*, Museum of Contemporary Art at Pacific Design Center and ONE Gallery, Los Angeles; and *ASCO: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972–1987*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2011).

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