



ARTIST

Willyum Rowe

TITLE

Untitled(#1 of 10 from Messages from innerspace series)

DATE

1979

DIMENSIONS

14 in H x 8.5 in W

MEDIUM

Copy Art

IMAGE NOTES

Color Xerox

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1983.057

CURRENT LOCATION

1114-2D

WILLYUM ROWE

BORN

1946

BIRTHPLACE

Rocheville Center, Long Island, NY

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Light Work Gallery, 1979

Artist-in-Residence, 1983

Lecturer, 1983

Light Work Retrospective Exhibition, 1985

Robert B. Menschel Gallery, 1992

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 7

Contact Sheet 36

Contact Sheet 97

Menschel Gallery Catalogue 28

Light Work Retrospective Catalogue

ESSAYS

Over the past twenty years Willyum Rowe has created works grounded in photography that combine drama and burlesque with a sensitive and intelligent equilibrium. While the conventions of photography underscore the majority of his work it is best to follow the links between the tragedy and comedy of Buster Keaton's adventures, the bite of Lenny Bruce's humor, the original genius of Howard Finster's folk art creations and the gender blending of Sylvester's night club persona, than to track Rowe's achievements in relation to the history of photography. The sheer elegance and complete virtuosity of Rowe's craft are stunning enough to sustain the work as celebrations of imagination and originality. His choice of materials, his endless attention to detail, his inventive use of form and space and his precise and original drawing skills elevate his work to visual enrichments that celebrate the potential of human invention. Rowe is a consummate collector. His early interest in stamp collecting continues to influence his current work. Much of his work is pieced together on pages made for stamp collectors and organized into the albums that are reproduced on the cover of this publication. The photographs he collects for the starting point of his images are scavenged from the flow of ready-made photographic icons produced by the millions each year that eventually find their way into garage sales, flea markets and thrift stores. Rowe selects publicity photos, snapshots, glamour studies, technical illustrations and advertisements that were originally made to convey specific messages. The images he selects maintain, among other things, that men are powerful, that women are demure and that decorum and order are qualities to be exalted. Rowe alters and adds to these found images preserving the persuasion of their original intent but dramatically uses them to cross boundaries they attempt to uphold. The majority of Rowe's work is done in the form of a series. By presenting the work in series, key elements of variety, abandon and risk are simultaneously emphasized within the individual works in the series, and in progression with other work in the same series. The devise of the series sets up a natural mode of comparison that invites us further into each work. One after another the wonderful inventions Rowe creates to explore the dynamics of tension shine in an atmosphere of frivolity and seriousness. Rowe combines resourceful and meticulous skills with perceptive observations. He comments on our cultural practices and offers insightful satirical comments about icons of our consumer culture. This seamless compliment of style and meaning creates a visual experience and intellectual encounter that is as powerful as it is alluring. Risks need to be taken in order to realize rewards, and in Willyum Rowe's work we are shown that the pursuit of discovery can be as much fun as it is revealing. Jeffrey Hoone (c)1992