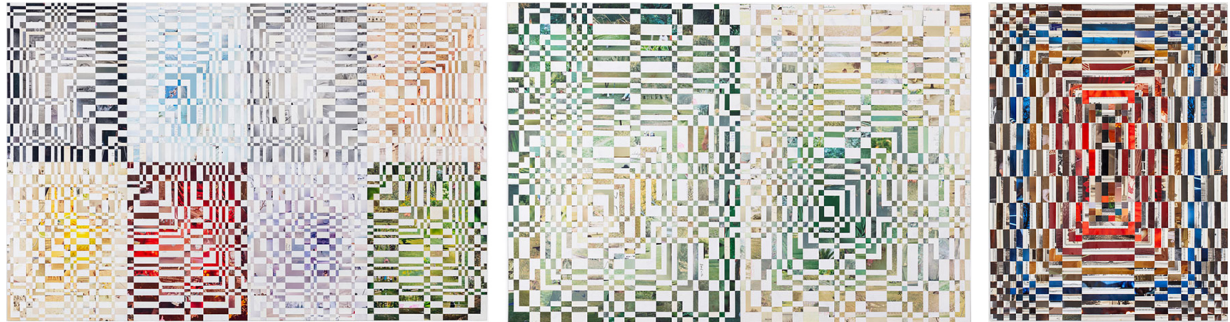


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Joe Rudko: 'Double Take' // Commanding Attention
Von Lintel Gallery, October 21 - December 2, 2023

by Jody Zellen



As in his previous exhibitions, Seattle-based artist Joe Rudko begins with other people's discarded snapshots. He cuts them apart, organizes them by color and subject, then reassembles them into geometric patterns to make his complex compositions. For *Double Take*, he uses both the front and backside of the photographs so his montages intersperse color fragments with white from the back of the images (including bits of text and hand writing). There is also a type of mirroring or doubling in many of the works which are presented as diptychs. For example, in *Emerald Double* (all works 2023), two intricate compositions of small rectangles, what is a "picture" on one side of the diptych is white on the other. Like in all of Rudko's works, it is impossible to "reassemble" the originals as each piece is comprised of many photographs. In *Emerald Double*, the fragments are suggestive and harken back to the source, in this case landscape and garden imagery in hues of yellow and green.

Sample is the most complex work in the exhibition. In this piece, Rudko divides the composition into eight sections, each one a combination of white and one color culled from the source photographs. Blue for oceans and skies, tan for sand and interior walls, green for grass, trees and gardens, red for flowers and miscellaneous lights. From afar, the pieces appear as abstractions that reference patterns of patchwork quilts. Yet upon close examination, the nuances of the fragments become apparent giving viewers the opportunity to construct their own narratives through the compositions.

In *9-patch*, the photos' alternating fronts and backs are organized by color and informed by the snippets of texts that move across the images, indicating places and dates as handwritten artifacts suggestive of another time. *Ripple* combines rectangles of bright color—cropped sections of the originals—with printed simple black lines that often frame old family photographs. Rudko uses these as horizontal and vertical bands to frame the abstract elements.

Rudko's images command attention and draw viewers in. While at first glance they are somewhat ambiguous — are they abstract or representational? Upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that they are both. The pieces are labor intensive and specific—every fragment plays a role in the overall design and leads the viewer's eyes through a rainbow of colors and imagery. The works are tinged with nostalgia, especially in the digital age, as they are reminders of those boxes of images stored in drawers or basements. For those who grew up with snapshots — faded images that were processed at photo labs and drug stores on different types and textures of paper—these works have a particular resonance.

<https://artnowla.com/2023/11/13/joe-rudko-double-take/>