

The approach

John Stezaker

Love

15th February – 25th March 2018

Preview: Wednesday, 14th February 2018, 6 – 9pm

The Approach is pleased to announce the forthcoming exhibition of British artist John Stezaker, presenting collages and found images that have been at the heart of his work since the 1970s. The presentation will survey the themes of love, desire, loss and betrayal that have been a significant part of Stezaker's practice over the decades. Interspersing the series *Photoroman*, *Film Still*, *Pair*, *Love*, and *Unassisted Readymades*, this exhibition brings together over 40 years of work made with an obsession with the found printed image and the new narratives that emerge by the slightest of precise interventions.

The *Photoroman* collages dating from the late 1970's, made from romantic picture stories printed in magazines of the time, show the early emergence of concerns with human relationships. Through repetition, fragmentation and superimposition, Stezaker disrupts the existing narratives by inventing disjointed, dreamlike scenarios; an interest that has continued throughout Stezaker's work up to the most recent collages in this exhibition. The recurring motif of a couple and a third person in the background—entering through a door, or as a lingering shadow—suggests moments of tension, secrecy or deception.

Recent collages using old postcards of landscapes superimposed onto found black and white film stills are more subtly narrative. The landscapes become suggestive of the psychology of the embracing lovers that are partly obscured beneath the postcards. Symbolisms of dark caves, flowing streams, or the abyss between two cliffs, allude to the subconscious and suggest the complex emotional 'landscape' of the respective couple.

While the early work seems often to highlight communication (via speech bubbles, the telephone and facial expressions), the more recent work focuses the viewer's attention on touch (the embrace, reaching hands) and vision. The figure of the voyeur recurs across different series and the gaze is highlighted in some collages through cone-shaped cut-outs that emerge from the eye of one personage looking onto another.

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As well as alluding to traditional heterosexual constellations through film noir scenes of couples kissing or arguing, Stezaker also creates ambiguity around gender and gendered relationships in his collages.

Unassisted Readymades is a series of found photographs that the artist has not altered, but rather presents as found readymade images that bear the traces of time and early methods of image adjustment, natural damage and deterioration.

John Stezaker (b. 1949, Worcester) lives and works in London and St. Leonards on Sea. Stezaker won the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize in 2012. Recent solo exhibitions at museums and institutions: 2017: Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, UK; Aftermath, York Art Gallery, UK; Lost World, City Gallery Wellington, New Zealand. 2016: Film Works, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill On Sea, UK; Collages, Fotomuseum Nederlands, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. 2013: Cut&Paste: John Stezaker, Centre de la Photographie Genève, Switzerland; John Stezaker: Working from the Collection, Les Rencontres Arles Photographie, Arles, France; John Stezaker: One on One, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel; Marriage, Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee, USA. 2011: John Stezaker, The Whitechapel Gallery, London, touring to MUDAM, Luxembourg and Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, USA; Lost Images, Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany.

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