

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JOHN STEZAKER

The Bridge

February 20 – March 21, 2009



Friedrich Petzel Gallery is pleased to present *The Bridge*, a new exhibition of collages by John Stezaker.

John Stezaker has been highly influential in the key artistic developments of the last three decades, from Conceptual Art, New Image Art through to the re-emergence of collage. As a leading figure of the British Conceptual Art group, Stezaker showed in the first Hayward Annual of 1972 called 'The New Art,' but his conceptual interests soon gave way to what can now be seen as a long-term fascination with the image. Using found photographs and printed material, Stezaker involves various techniques in these collages, such as removals, maskings, reparations, rotations and visual concordances. While juxtaposing disparate sources his work creates compelling new images, relationships and characters.

The recent 'Bridge' works evolved from a series of topographical collages that began in the late '80's, involving combinations and inversions of the upper parts of cityscapes across a diagonal divide to create bridge-like spaces. These imaginary and gravity-defying spaces of ambiguity negotiate a void, above and below.

The source images are tourist books of Prague and its castle from the 1940's to 50's, collected originally by Stezaker because of his interest in the world of Kafka's castle. The uncanny dream-like spaces evoked in these pictorial bridges have become more precarious in the most recent collages. They feel more imminently endangered – the atmosphere is more apocalyptic. They share with his better-known film portrait collages (also on view) a dark fascination with the fragility of the photographic illusion.

The portrait collages, which he describes as 'marriages' of different identities (often different sexes), become the site for the making and the unmaking of persona.

The 'bridge' and the 'marriage' are Stezaker's metaphors for the collage process itself: a bringing of worlds together, a binding of the separated. But these acts of connection seem also only to reveal that what is bound is already falling apart. Collage in this sense is a kind of revelatory suspension of the image between the opposing forces of simulation and dis-simulation.

This is John Stezaker's first solo exhibition at Friedrich Petzel Gallery in New York. Other recent solo shows include: 'Mask and Shadow' at the A Palazzo Gallery in Brescia, Italy (2008); John Stezaker 'New Work' at Galerie Dennis Kimmerich, Düsseldorf, Germany (2008); 'Fumetti' at GAK in Bremen, Germany (2008); A two part show: 'Marriage', Karsten Schubert, London and 'Mask', The Approach W1, London (2007); The Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2007); Stills Gallery, Edinburgh (2007); Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool (2007); Project Room, Yvon Lambert, Paris (2007).

The exhibition will open on Friday, February 20th from 6:00 – 8:00 PM and will remain on view through March 21st. Friedrich Petzel Gallery is located at 535 West 22nd Street, New York, New York 10011. For further information, please contact the gallery at (212) 680-9467 or info@petzel.com.