

## The approach

# John Stezaker

## *Double Shadow*

24<sup>th</sup> February – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Preview:** Wednesday 23<sup>th</sup> February, 6-8pm

The Approach is pleased to present *Double Shadow*, a solo exhibition of new collage works by John Stezaker.

Duality, both physical and metaphoric have always been at the centre of Stezaker's work. In the most recent *Double Shadow* collages the processes of splitting and doubling are used to reflect on the duplicitous figure of the uncanny: the doppelgänger, Janus and hermaphrodite figures. The combination of silhouette contours reanimate these archetypal images from their most anodyne source. The contours of the figures of masculinity and femininity, so sharply delineated in 1950s Hollywood images, are dissolved into strange and sometimes monstrous hybrids; uneasy pairings created in the intersection of shadows that seem to hover between worlds. Inspired by the use of silhouettes in fin de siècle fairytale illustrations and early expressionist cinema, Stezaker claims to have "rediscovered the pleasures of drawing" in these works, "in the power of contour to delineate the edge between presence and absence and the imaginary and the real."

In the *Double Shadows* two silhouette cut-outs are overlaid (and occasionally intertwined), shifting the focus from an absent foreground figure to the normally unnoticed background in the creation of a third figure: an impossible and uneasy fusion somewhere between the 'real' world of the photographic image and imaginary otherworlds. The resultant shadow figures stir an inexplicable uneasiness in the viewer.

A new interest in colour in the *Double Shadows* is something we are not used to seeing from an artist who has mainly been drawn to black and white film still photography. In the past, collages have regularly used black grounds, but in this exhibition the works, though still dark in tone, are mounted on a variety of subtly coloured grounds of deep blues, reds and greens. The coloured printed pages of the 1950s film annuals employed in the work chime with the pinks, greens, shades of blue, dark smoky hues and bright yellows bringing to these image composites a dreamlike atmosphere and complexity.

To accompany the *Double Shadows*, we are showing the film *Kiss, 2020*, in The Annexe. The film is made up of a large number of the artist's collection of film still images re-photographed and projected at 25 frames a second. The fast-moving sequence of discontinuous images of kisses builds in intensity the longer one watches. Even though each individual image seems to evade our perception, the continuity of the subject of the kiss provides a singular, if ungraspable, point of focus. Despite the fact that there is no point of stillness to be found in the film loop, the viewer is compelled to focus on the central point of the image where two pairs of lips meet in a slippery and unconsummated fusion.

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John Stezaker (b. 1949, Worcester) lives and works in London and St. Leonards-on-Sea. Recent solo exhibitions include: *John Stezaker*, Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples, Italy (2021); *At the Edge of Pictures: John Stezaker, Works 1975–1990*, Luxembourg & Co, London, UK (2020); *John Stezaker*, National Portrait Gallery, London (2019); *Lost World*, City Gallery Wellington, New Zealand (touring show) (2017-2018); *John Stezaker*, Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, UK; *Aftermath*, York Art Gallery, UK (2017); *Film Works*, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, UK; *Collages*, Fotomuseum Nederlands, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2015); *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 (2013); *Marriage*, Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee, USA; *John Stezaker*, The Whitechapel Gallery, London, touring to MUDAM, Luxembourg and Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, USA (2011-2012); *Lost Images*, Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany (2010).

Stezaker was awarded the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize in 2012. His work has been the focus of a number of publications, including *John Stezaker: At the Edge of Pictures*, Yuval Etgar, Koenig Books, London (2020); *John Stezaker: Love*, London: Ridinghouse, published on the occasion of *Love* at The Approach, London (2019); *John Stezaker: Lost World*, London: Ridinghouse, published on the occasion of *Lost World*, touring exhibition in various Australia and New Zealand locations (2018) and *John Stezaker*, London: Ridinghouse, in association with Whitechapel Gallery, Mudam Luxembourg, and Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum (2010).

Stezaker's work is in collections worldwide, including: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Arts Council England, UK; Birmingham Museums Trust, UK; British Council Collection, UK; Ellipse Foundation Contemporary Art Collection, Cascais, Portugal; FRAC Ile-de-France/ Le Plateau, Paris, France; Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, USA; MoMA, New York, USA; MUDAM Collection, Luxembourg; RISD Museum of Art, Providence, USA; The Rubell Family Collection, Miami, USA; Sammlung Verbund, Vienna, Austria; Seattle Art Museum, Washington, USA; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Tate Collection, London, UK; The University of Warwick Art Collection, Coventry, UK; The York Museum Trust, York, UK; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK.

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