

Petzel

JOHN STEZAKER

New silkscreens

U.S. premiere of the film *Blind*

October 9 – November 8, 2014

Opening reception: Thursday, October 9th, 6-8pm

Petzel Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new silkscreens by the London-based artist John Stezaker and the U.S. premiere of his film "Blind." This is the artist's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery.

Shadows and silhouettes have been a dominant feature in Stezaker's work since the late 1970s. Some of the earliest of his silhouette collages called the "Dark Stars," 1979-80, involved the removal of the main figures from cinema publicity portraits of the '40s and '50s and were shown at Petzel Gallery in 2011. In addition to these and other small-scale 'shadow' collages of the 1970s and '80s, Stezaker also went on to exploit the silhouette device in silkscreen prints on canvas, the first of which was produced in 1989. Now, for the first time in 25 years, he has been able to return to this series of silkscreen prints on black canvas.

Stezaker's "Shadow" silkscreens respond to the projection and enlargement of the cinematic image. By using redundant lobby film stills as his source material, he inverts their staged, condensed and illustrative scale and returns them to the cinematic experience they once endeavored to represent. Most of the images used in the "Shadow" series come from the 1940s and '50s when the dominant image of cinema seemed to shift from the central spotlight of spectacular vision to the periphery of shadow in what became known as "film noir." Indeed, the shadowy underworlds of B-movies have been a significant source of fascination within Stezaker's relationship to the cinematic image. Whereas his collages establish a distance and remove from the appropriated image, Stezaker's silkscreens generate a palpable bodily presence through shadowy absences.

Stezaker's return to silkscreen printing reflects a general shift of interest towards the projected image in his recent work. In his latest film "Blind," he also returns the film still to the space of cinematic projection by creating a film of stills – a still film. By projecting a random sequence of his collection of film stills, each at 1/24th of a second, a duration at which the eye is said to be physiologically blind to each image, "Blind" creates an intense and dazzling palimpsest of after-images. Initially, "Blind" seems like an overwhelming bombardment of disparate images, like an encounter with the violence of the film image and the incessant difference of image technology. Gradually however, after yielding to the immersive experience, the intensity begins to settle into a dream-like space of estranged after-images.

Both the film and the silkscreens involve a suspension of the image from its original function. Whereas Stezaker's silkscreens and collages generate stilled disconnections through

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occlusion and obscurity, “Blind” uses speed and simultaneity to create a similar amnesic recollection of after-images. With the black grounds of his silkscreens Stezaker marries modernist negation with the shadowy end game of ‘noir’ cinema in a new and dramatic scale.

John Stezaker was born in 1949 in England. His work appeared most recently in the 19th Biennale of Sydney in Australia. Institutional solo exhibitions include the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel (2013) and the Whitechapel Gallery, London, (2011), which traveled to MUDAM Luxembourg and the Kemper Art Museum in St. Louis. His work is included in the public collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Tate Collection, London; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Ellipse Foundation, Cacaïs. He lives and works in London.

Petzel Gallery is located at 456 W 18th Street, New York, NY 10011. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00am – 6:00pm. For press inquiries, please contact Andrew Black at andrew@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.