

# SPRÜTH MAGERS

***Stephen Shore***

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**Sprüth Magers Los Angeles JUNE 19 - AUGUST 30 2019**

Public reception: Tuesday, June 18, 6-8pm

One of the most important and influential photographers of the last half-century, Stephen Shore has produced an expansive body of work that has to a significant degree shaped our vision of the American experience from the 1960s to today. In 1971, at age twenty-four, he was the first living photographer in forty years to receive a solo exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and he was a key figure in the recognition of color photography as an artistic medium beginning in the 1970s. Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to announce the first solo presentation of Shore's work in Los Angeles since 2005, when his major traveling exhibition *The Biographical Landscape* opened at the Hammer Museum. On view at Sprüth Magers, Los Angeles will be three of the artist's photographic series spanning the years 1969 to the present, each of which reveal his ability to project an approachable, casual aesthetic that is infused nonetheless with subtlety, complexity, and a quiet, affecting power.

Throughout his career, Shore has used a variety of cameras and has always been open to new technologies. The acquisition in 2017 of the revolutionary Hasselblad X1D camera has enabled the artist to make images which match and even surpass the resolution of more traditional tools. Shore's experimentations with this new apparatus have resulted in the series *Details* (2017–ongoing), which serves as the cornerstone of the present exhibition. Shot in locations where the artist regularly spends time, including New York City, upstate New York, Montana and London, these photographs highlight his remarkable eye for textural contrasts and poignant compositions, even when picturing the most mundane of subjects. Natural and human-made elements come into intimate contact with one another across the series, as in bird's eye scenes of scattered leaves on asphalt sharing space with Dunkin' Donuts bags, cigarette butts, and bottle tops; or a frontal view of ancient murals carved onto mottled, sediment-laden rock. In these pictures, Shore manages to hold in careful balance the sense of a photograph as a transparent index of the world and, at the same time, an artful combination of light, line and color.

Offering a lens onto the origins of Shore's intuitive pictorial approach is another of Shore's series, and one of his earliest: *Los Angeles, California, February 4, 1969*. Created almost exactly fifty years ago, and in the same city as this exhibition, it marks a moment in which Shore was testing new ways of structuring his pictures. Intrigued by both the focus on popular culture he had witnessed while spending time in Andy Warhol's Factory (1965–68), as well as the conceptual frameworks that artists in other media were building

into their work in the late 1960s, the young photographer took advantage of a trip to Los Angeles to create a new kind of photographic project. He established several constraints, including that he would shoot mainly from the back seat of a car and that he would keep every picture he took, in the order in which he took them. The result is a stream-of-consciousness view of one day in LA, presented in consecutive groupings of twelve photographs. Iconic features, such as Standard Oil stations, palm trees, and billboards, intermingle with fleeting impressions of cloud-streaked skies, pedestrians and traffic. In addition, multiple views of the same scene, set side-by-side, offer an unparalleled glimpse into the development of Shore's snapshot aesthetic and deepening consideration of vernacular subjects.

Finally, the exhibition includes a selection of works from the artist's landmark series, *American Surfaces* (1972–73), taken as he traveled around the United States in his mid-twenties. Part visual diary, part elegy to a disappearing localized America, these photographs of commonplace objects and situations revel in textures, patterning and heavily saturated hues: green pearlescent Formica, the dimpled glass of a phone booth window, tessellated arrays of pink gradated tiles behind a man in a bright avocado-colored shirt. The "Surfaces" in the title refers literally to this textural aspect of the series, yet it also calls to mind the surface of the photograph itself, and the visual conventions and systems of thought through which we understand photographic images.

Many of these concerns are still present, albeit in different ways, in Shore's more recent *Details*. He has described his picture-making process as "a complex, ongoing, spontaneous interaction of observation, understanding, imagination, and intention" (Shore, *The Nature of Photographs*, p. 132), and together these series make clear his persistent focus and attention to everyday subjects that feel at once prosaic and extraordinary. Shore's photographs urge us, in turn, to look more deeply and meaningfully at the world around us, and to find beauty among its arrangements and peculiarities.

Stephen Shore (born 1947, New York City) lives in Tivoli, New York, and since 1982 has been Director of the Photography Program at Bard College. A major retrospective of his work was on view at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2017-18). Further selected solo exhibitions include those at Huis Marseille, Amsterdam, and C/O Berlin (2016), Les Rencontres d'Arles (2015), Fundacion Mapfre, Madrid (2014), Aspen Art Museum (2011), *Der Rote Bulli: Stephen Shore and the New Düsseldorf Photography*, NRW-Forum, Düsseldorf (2010), International Center of Photography, New York (2007), Sprengel Museum, Hannover (1995), Art Institute of Chicago (1984), Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (1977), and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1971). Recent group exhibitions include those at Luma Foundation, Arles (2018), Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris (2017), Museo Jumex, Mexico City (2017), Vancouver Art Gallery (2016), Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2016), George Eastman House, Rochester (2015), Tate Modern, London (2014), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2014), and Barbican Art Centre, London (2014). The recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, Shore was recently honored as the 2019 Photo London Master of Photography.

The gallery is concurrently presenting an exhibition of paintings by Eric Fischl.

For further information and press enquiries, contact Claire Rifelj ([claire@spruethmagers.com](mailto:claire@spruethmagers.com)).

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Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm