



FT-06

11-04-11

JOHN STEZAKER (b. 1949)

Untitled

film portrait collage

10 1/4 x 7 7/8 in.

2007

2702

PROVENANCE:

Heather James Fine Art, Palm Desert, California

John Stezaker's work re-examines the various relationships to the photographic image: as documentation of truth, purveyor of memory, and symbol of modern culture. In his collages, Stezaker appropriates images found in books, magazines, and postcards and uses them as "readymades." Through his elegant juxtapositions, Stezaker adopts the content and contexts of the original images to convey his own witty and poignant meanings.

Stezaker often focuses on the concept of portraiture, both as art historical genre and public identity. Using publicity shots of classic film stars, Stezaker slices and overlaps famous faces, creating hybrid 'icons' that dissociate the familiar to create sensations of the uncanny. Coupling male and female identity into unified characters, Stezaker points to a disjointed harmony, where the irreconciliation of difference both complements and detracts from the whole. In his correlated images, personalities (and our idealizations of them) become ancillary and empty, rendered abject through their magnified flaws and struggle for visual dominance.

In using stylistic images from Hollywood's golden era, Stezaker both temporally and conceptually engages with his interest in Surrealism. Placed in contemporary context, his portraits retain their aura of glamour, whilst simultaneously operating as exotic "artifacts" of an obsolete culture. Similar to the photos of "primitivism" published in George Bataille's "Documents," Stezaker's portraits celebrate the grotesque, rendering the romance with modernism equally compelling and perverse.

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