

Petzel

JOHN STEZAKER

The Voyeur: Photoroman Collages, 1976–1979

November 10, 2017 – January 6, 2018

Opening Reception: Friday, November 10th, 6–8pm

35 East 67th Street

Petzel Gallery is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by London-based artist John Stezaker. This is the artist's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery and his first at our Upper East Side location.

Stezaker first came across photoromans on a trip to Italy in 1973. Attracted by their modern, colorful aesthetic he began collecting them, but it was not until he discovered the Spanish iterations that Stezaker's collages took off. The female-orientated romantic plots of the black and white Spanish photoromans were similar to their Italian counterparts, but where the Iberian ones differed, was in their slight bent toward soft porn; seemingly with a male audience in mind. Titillating shower scenes and other narrative intrusions often culminated in violence. As the male invaded the female domain, either accidentally or secretly as a voyeur, the intrusion was often mirrored by a visual disruption of the vertical grid of frames on the page. "Sex and love," Stezaker writes, "seemed incompatible in these claustrophobic boxed narratives". This unsettlingly *and* alluring dichotomy became the driving force for the photoroman collages Stezaker produced in the latter part of the 1970s.

The kiss—central to the photoroman narrative, and also as Stezaker notes, "cinema's most ubiquitous still image of itself"—dominates these collages. As a euphemism for sexual consummation, the kiss simultaneously represents sex and is part of it. "I thought of this as a kind of leak between the simulacral and the real," Stezaker explains, "a realization that in order to enact a kiss, the actors must kiss, converting a stereotypical trope into an object of voyeurism...Where cinema promises a space in which reality and illusion seamlessly dissolve, the photoroman was an opportunity for me to explore the seams."

John Stezaker was born in 1949 in England. His work appeared recently in the 19th Biennale of Sydney in Australia (2014). 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 on the third floor of 35 East 67th Street between Madison and Park Avenues, New York City. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquires, please contact Janine Latham at janine@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.