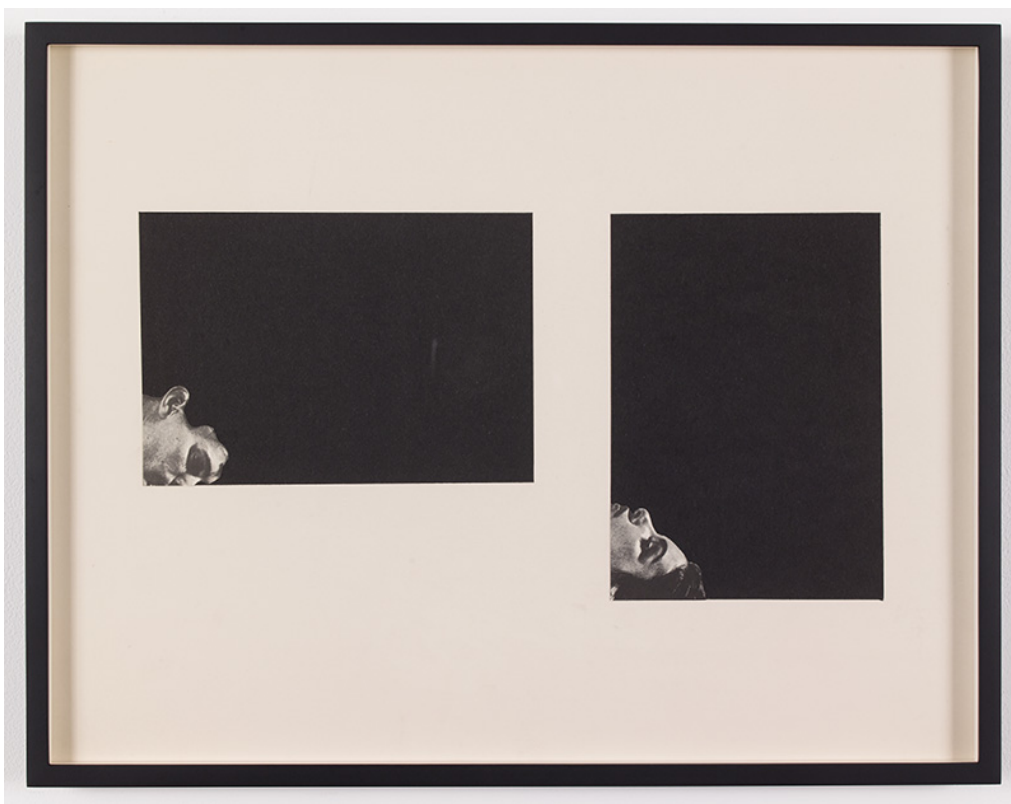


Petzel

Dimitris Lempesis, "John Stezaker," *Dream Idea Machine*, November 10, 2017.



ART CITIES: N.York - John Stezaker



John Stezaker was one of the first generation of British conceptual artists exhibiting in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His main inspirations were Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke but at the same time a critique of the pop-cultural image was being launched by thinkers like Guy Debord; the Situationists' scurrilous repurposing of media imagery became an exemplary strategy for him, alongside his abiding, and then unfashionable, interest in surrealism.

By Dimitris Lempesis

Petzel

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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 ready-made. Through his elegant juxtapositions, Stezaker adopts the content and contexts of the original images to convey his own witty and poignant meanings. John Stezaker presents his solo exhibition "The Voyeur: Photoroman Collages, 1976–1979" at Petzel Gallery in New York. 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 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. Stezaker writes "Sex and love 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.



John Stezaker, Touch I (Photoroman), c. 1979, Collage, 16.7 x 25.5 cm, Courtesy Petzel Gallery

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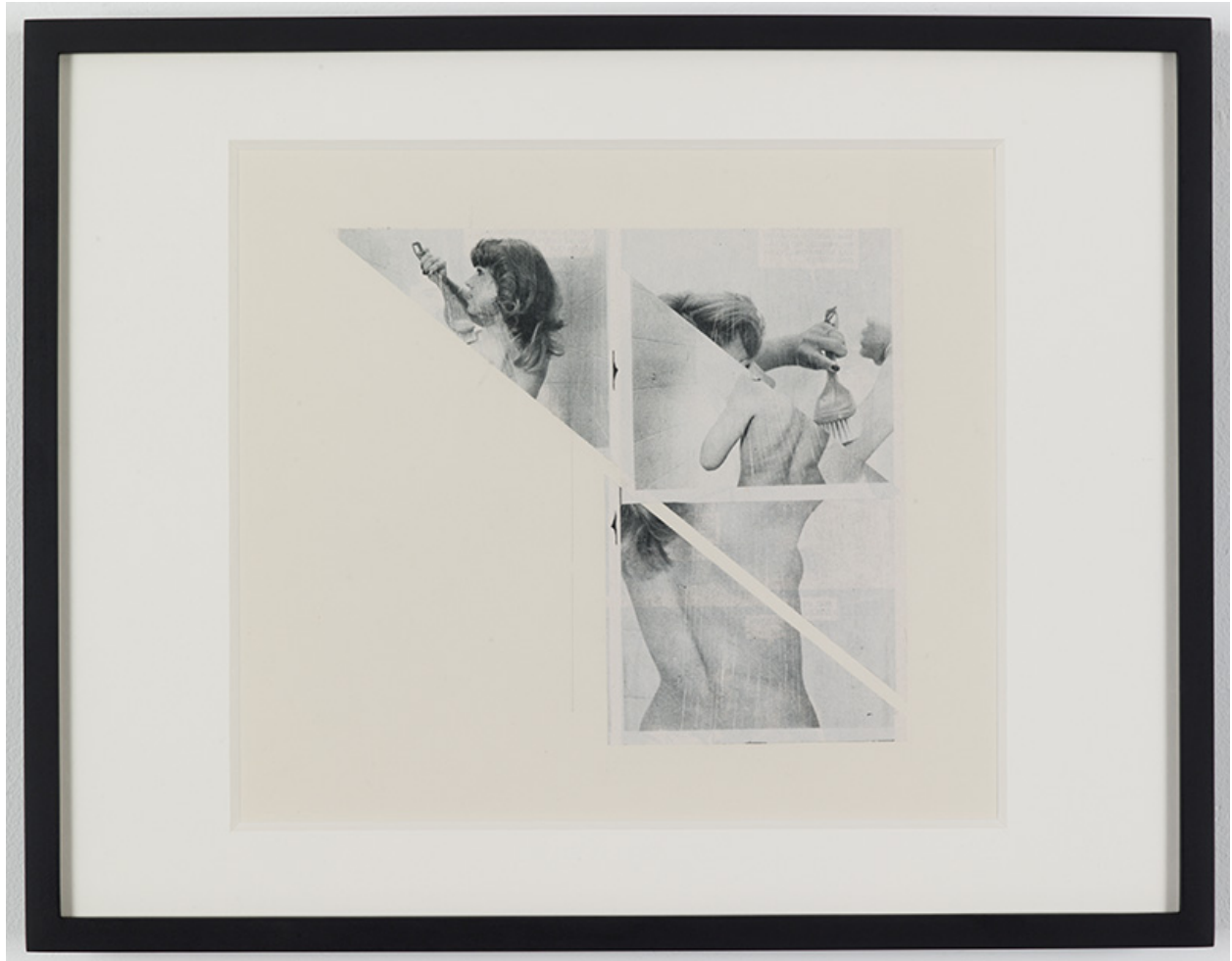
John Stezaker, Double I (Photoroman), 1976-77, Collage, 6.5 x 16.2 cm, Courtesy Petzel Gallery



John Stezaker, Double II (Photoroman), 1976, Collage, 11.3 x 14.2 cm, Courtesy Petzel Gallery

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John Stezaker, *The Voyeur III (Photoroman)*, 1977-78, Collage, 18.2 x 20.3 cm, Courtesy Petzel Gallery

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