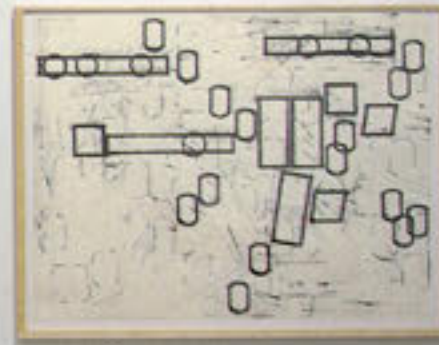
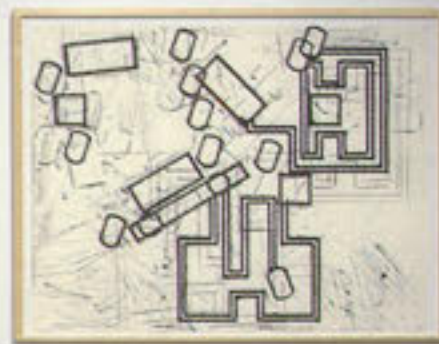
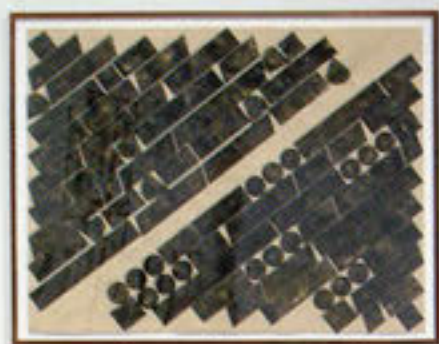


Art in America

MAY 2005



Barry Le Va "Faces in the Crowd" Charles Long
Robert Zakanitch Reports from Korea

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tively than *Feral Air* (1992), in which the precision of forms complements the bizarre combination of objects. In this piece, a large worktable holds a dense array of smaller sculptures, along with bronze-cast sticks, rope, shoes and tree roots. The rectilinear forms of the table and two chairs disappear under the visual weight of the collected motifs, suggesting that the piece can be read as a metaphor for Dine's prodigious visual imagination.

If there is a hint of Surrealist humor and dissociation in Dine's work, his emotional tenor seems very un-Surrealist. He appears motivated by a desire to cut to deeper human feelings and a longing to engage the stories that run through human lives.

—Vincent Katz



Tom Bills: *Cowboy Dreams*, 2004, flame cut steel slab, 32 1/2 by 10 by 7 1/2 inches; at B. Sakata-Garo.

LONDON

John Stezaker at The Approach

Combining early and late work, John Stezaker's first solo show in almost a decade revealed how effectively his intimate photographs reenergize the modernist fascination with an urban uncanny. Presented in a freestanding display case were examples from his "Third Person Archive," which was begun in 1976. Here Stezaker, who was born in 1949, presents enlargements of human figures from John Hammerton's 1920s encyclopedia, *Countries of*

the World. As if in homage to a forgotten flâneur, these grainy, surveillancelike works invite us to engage with images remote from our present. Contemporary with early Surrealism, the people in *Countries of the World* remind Stezaker of the somnambulant anonymous types in paintings by de Chirico, Delvaux and Magritte. Begun as a limited series for book publication, the collection has grown to suggest an infinitely expandable archive.

Along the walls of the gallery were examples from the disorienting "City" series (2000-04). Barely larger than postcards, these found-image collages either invert a single urban image or horizontally bisect one cityscape with the upturned photograph of another, and have been carefully glued in place to maximize disequilibrium.

In another space were some larger collages using original 1960s material—Stezaker relishes the oversaturated color and tangible screen texture of cheap, mid-century magazine images. *Third Person II* (1990) partly overlays an actor's face with a fragment of Alpine landscape—featuring a Tyrolean maid in the foreground—that has been cut to form a woman's silhouette. The portrait of the actor is thus disfigured by fissured mountainsides whose peaks are oddly capped by his over-groomed black hair. The piece extracts dense residues of meaning from a basic cut-and-paste technique. As the two components fuse and separate, we notice that the distant mountain snow is picked up by the pattern on the actor's jacket and the glossy undulations of his hair. This miscegenation of "natural beauties" produces monstrosities that convey the psychological impact of sexual longing. Something similar happens in an untitled work from 1990. In this variant erotic allegory, the face of a starlet gazing into a hand mirror is all but concealed by a superimposed silhouette cut from a scene of soldiers scaling a cliff face.

In the 1970s, Stezaker was influential for his approach to found photographs that broke with Pop treatments to propose alternative significations and raise issues of authorship. His work was admired by artists like Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince. More recently, a resurgence of collage by young London artists has led to renewed interest in Stezaker's art.

In addition, his practice of using only British illustrations sets an interesting precedent for the emphasis on local content that distinguishes so much recent London work. —Mark Harris

BERLIN

Sergej Jensen at Galerie Neu

Thirty-one-year-old Berliner Sergej Jensen designed his exhibition as a living room, which he filled with paintings, a sequined tableau, collaged-sack pieces, carpets and a video (all 2004). At the same time, he stripped the bourgeois interior of any coziness (the fireplace was cold, and outside the window lay the ashy remains of opening-night fireworks), so that the busy room felt strangely abandoned.

By fabricating several wall pieces out of used money bags, Jensen signaled his interest in exchange and circulation. He treated these worn and empty bags (all 10 by 6 inches and acquired on eBay) as objects of inherent worth. For *Tower of Nothing II*, Jensen turned 12 money bags upside-down, arranged them into a rectangle and sewed them directly onto a raw linen canvas. Elsewhere, he simply stitched bags together and hung them on stretchers, forming grids that recall framed fabrics in ethnographic galleries. With no surface markings by the artist, the interest—and "humanity"—derived from the subtle differences that had developed in the bags' hues and shapes after a lifetime of circulation.

Recycling continued in three carpets (the largest 78 by 156 inches) woven of canvas shopping-bag scraps showing bits of commercial logos. Nearby, a TV monitor played a video of an anonymous man offering money to street musicians in a park—another ceremony of exchange.

Jensen's literalness expresses itself in representational compositions as well as abstract ones. He machine-sewed sequins onto linen to render a view of iconic factories with smokestacks (*Fabric Factory*). Since the sequins formed red and white stripes, they also read as mutilated American flags, the starry blue field removed. *O.T. Sock* is a col-



John Stezaker: *Composite Cities III / B>*, 1994-97, collage, 12 1/2 by 17 1/2 inches; at The Approach.

lage of red, green and undyed burlap shaped like a giant striped sock or, given its colors, an empty Christmas stocking (a riff on the flattened money bags?). Burlap reappears in *Work II* as the ground on which Jensen painted broad, black brushstrokes suggesting a Japanese mountain landscape. By contrast, the bleach stains of *New Day Rising II* offered no representational suggestions.

Half-Danish and half-Serb, Jensen studied with Thomas Bayrle at the Frankfurt Städelschule. He plays in indie and punk-rock bands besides exhibiting his artwork, which was shown in 2004 at London's White Cube and in the São Paulo Biennial. Rehabilitating discarded materials, Jensen melds the meager and the poetic, but this show's point lay squarely in its commercial-gallery setting. Given that the artist set out to exchange his work for the *Geld* associated with those money bags, was he critical of or complicit with art commerce? No doubt both. Was the installation perhaps too elegant? Not by a stitch.

—Arden Reed

Sergej Jensen: *Tower of Nothing II*, 2004, money bags on linen, 69 by 51 inches; at Galerie Neu.

