

arts wednesday

To seduce and disturb

By Cate McQuaid
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So much depends on an intersection. One line may join with another seamlessly. Or two **GALLERIES** may crash together at sharp angles. John

Stezaker and Frank Egloff, in their show at Barbara Krakow Gallery, make incisive use of intersections in works that collage and layer photographs.

The photographs are not their own. Egloff, an area artist better known for his paintings that mash up and tweak images from vintage photographs, borrows fragments from works by Garry Winogrand and Bruce Davidson. Stezaker, a British artist who had a moment in the sun in the 1970s and has recently made a comeback, slices and dices 1940s-era, black-and-white headshots of actors.

Stezaker lures us in with an initial sense of familiarity — the smile, the pose, the sparkle in the eye. But up close, the trite glamour turns monstrous, as in “She (Film Portrait Collage) XVIII,” which splices two blondes. The swoops of frosted hair atop their heads match up as if they were one. And they are: one nose, one mouth, two eyes. But an added curl of nostril droops below that nose, and the chin line hikes up abruptly. The eyes, while both gazing to the side, pull away from one another. Beauty becomes the beast.

The conjoined lines in Egloff’s work push toward abstraction. “After Garry Winogrand, 1961, New York/ unattributed, undated” layers a cropped, rotated Winogrand street scene — we see legs and shadows on a sidewalk — on a translucent sheet over an anonymous print of a woman’s back. She looms in the foreground before a crowd of what might be beach-goers.



Clockwise from top: John Stezaker’s “She (Film Portrait Collage) XVIII,” Saul Chernick’s “Sleepwalker,” and Barbara Grad’s “Partial Recall.”

Her hand reaches up and joins with a feminine shadow cast on Winogrand’s sidewalk, and the inverted calf of Winogrand’s female pedestrian spills right down the line of her open-backed dress. The feminine figures here are shadows; they are veiled; they slide into one another. Then, a man’s trouser-clad legs jut crisply to the side, suggesting that men are simpler and more direct.

As in Stezaker’s work, some of Egloff’s contours make easy segues from one image to another, and some feel jagged and disruptive. All together make for a seductive, and disturbing, whole.

Translucent washes

Barbara Grad’s deep and shimmering painting show at Howard Yezerski Gallery is called “Lost Horizons,” a refer-

FRANK EGLOFF AND JOHN STEZAKER: Visible Merge
At: Barbara Krakow Gallery, 10 Newbury St., through March 9. 617-262-4490, www.barbarakrakowgallery.com

BARBARA GRAD: Lost Horizons

JAMES MONTFORD: Black Indians in Space
At: Howard Yezerski Gallery, 460 Harrison Ave., through March 12. 617-262-0550, www.howardyezerski.com

SAUL CHERNICK: A Skyward Gesture

At: LaMontagne Gallery, 555 East Second St., South Boston, through March 9. 617-464-4640, www.lamontagne.com

with their hard lines and evocations of natural grooves and textures, and evanescent.

In the back room at Yezerski, check out James Montford’s outrageous little collages. Montford affixes racially charged images — copies of old cartoons, or pictures of toys akin to Little Black Sambo — onto starry, cosmic backgrounds. They all have tiny, child-sized bodies. The action and characters recall the surreal comic of a century ago, “Little Nemo.”

“The Great Creator” has a black-and-white cartoon of a dark face with a big, red mouth, wearing a feathered headdress over a baby’s body in footed pajamas. Red feathers explode from the headdress and flutter through space. These works connect childhood innocence and the expansiveness of outer space with the unpinned grenades of over-the-top racial (and sometimes sexual) imagery. The result is disconcerting and hilarious.

Mystical cosmology

Saul Chernick anchors his drawings and prints at LaMontagne Gallery in the styles of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. They’re filled with cherubs and otherworldly beasts. In the most elaborate drawing, gorgeously rendered, “The Gathering Place,” everything has mythic implications. An old man’s loincloth is an animal’s head, a cave housing a cherub is a fanged, open mouth. In “Sleepwalker,” two cherubs clad a walking skeleton in flesh.

Chernick evokes a mystical cosmology, which he ties to the 21st century in drawings such as “A Skyward Gesture,” in which a man in a loincloth made of leaves takes a yogic triangle pose, and in prints that nest black computer monitors and search boxes amid ornate frames, heraldic symbols, and more cherubs. These reaches into the present feel forced, an effort to make his work contemporary. It’s odd and intriguing enough as it is.

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