Punctum Caecum:
The Blind Spot

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An exegesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
The Bachelor of Creative Arts, Visual Arts (Honours)

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October 2017

Table of Contents

Summary

This project began as an investigation into how it might be possible for two or more people to be looking at something and see it differently. This line of inquiry came about from my own personal experience of living with prosopagnosia, otherwise known as face-blindness, and wondering how I might be seeing differently to those around me.

My research has revolved around the philosophical thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein and his theory of seeing aspects including the noticing of aspects and aspect dawning. I have looked at Wittgenstein's example of the duck-rabbit and shown how an image can be seen as more than one thing. Furthermore I have explored how the dawning of an aspect might be reinterpreted or mirrored as inspiration in Maurice Blanchot's text *The Gaze of Orpheus*, also commenting on the similarities between Blanchot's description of the veil and Wittgenstein's claims regarding the viewers ability to notice aspects.

Focusing on specific works by contemporary artists John Baldessari and John Stezaker I show how Wittgenstein's theories can be applied to aspects within their works. I point to the similarities in the ideas that show up when the artists talk about their work and my own interpretations of these works within the framework of aspect seeing and the noticing of aspects.

My own work explores how these discoveries can be used to show a viewer that they are capable of looking at something that can be seen in more than one way. I question whether images are static and open up the possibility that when images are placed together they can open a space where a third [or more] image can exist for the viewer to see. This exegesis and the accompany artworks aim to show that we do indeed, all see differently.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the exegesis, this exegesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from an exegesis or any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the exegesis.

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Date: October 2017

List of Plates

Acknowledgements

Introduction
Punctum Caecum (pŭngk'təm see-kuh): the Blind Spot

Vision begins with light passing through the cornea and the lens, which combine to produce a clear image of the visual world on a sheet of photoreceptors called the retina. The signals are then sent via the optic nerve to other parts of brain, which ultimately processes the image and allows us to see.

(The Society for Neuroscience 2012)

For those who have vision, in other words, those who are biologically able to see, it is easy to imagine that because the function of vision 'begins with light passing through the cornea and the lens' etc. that when someone is looking at something that we are also looking at, their looking is the same as our looking. In other words, the light is passing through the lens and the cornea and is combining in such a way that we are seeing the same thing. We live with the assumption that we all see things in the same way. Although we know that we often have a different point of view, it is much harder to understand that we have different processes of seeing and differing abilities to see.

Punctum Caecum refers to a biological hole in our vision. It is the place within our retina that does not register light so therefore cannot process a particular section of the image we are looking at. It is the physiological blind spot that we are mostly unaware of. It is invisible to us because our vision works in such a way that each eye is able to compensate for the lack of the other; the left eye is able to fill in the information that the right eye is unable to register, and vice versa. The Collins dictionary has defined a blind spot as; the small area insensitive to light, in the retina of the eye where the optic nerve enters, as well as; an area where vision is hindered or obscured, and; a prejudice, or area of ignorance that one has but is often unaware of (Collins Dictionary). The very meaning of a blind spot is a thing we don't know that we don't know.

As an adult I discovered that I had prosopagnosia. Otherwise known as face-blindness, prosopagnosia is a condition in which a person has a marked deficit in their ability to recognise familiar people by their facial features. According to the Bournemouth University Centre for Face Processing Disorders and Prosopagnosia Research (2016) prosopagnosia had been considered as a disorder that followed on from neurological damage typically caused by stroke or head injury. It is only recently that studies have shown that some people, such as myself, have what is known as congenital or developmental prosopagnosia.

As children none of us are so self-aware as to question much at all, but by the time I had reached adulthood there had been moments where I had suspected that I was not able to see as others did. Unaware of the condition of prosopagnosia, I put it down to other reasons. I made excuses to myself such as being 'in my own head', 'distracted and pre-occupied' and mostly 'forgetful'. I continued on through life, lived with the occasional embarrassment, and both consciously and unconsciously, learned ways to compensate for the short-fall. This was somewhat easier to do as a young adult. I travelled often and moved frequently. As a tour manager in the music industry, I met and worked with new people all

the time so it wasn't such a concern or surprise when I didn't recognise a workmate or acquaintance.

I remember reading an interview about one of my favourite actors/comedians Stephen Fry. In the interview Fry mentioned that he had recently discovered he had prosopagnosia, describing how he found it difficult to recognise people out of context and I remember having the fleeting thought of 'yes, I get that too'. Fry's experience didn't have much of an impact at the time but it must have stuck with me somehow.

Two very specific personal experiences, which occurred quite close together, finally led me to the realisation that I had face-blindness. The first was meeting someone at the supermarket (not one I usually go to) who, from the greeting they gave me and the conversation that followed led me to believe that they knew me quite well. They asked questions about my work and my daughter and my studies and I had absolutely no idea who they were and went into a panic. It was a very awkward conversation and I remember the person departed looking very confused. I likewise, was very confused and upset. It was quite confronting to think that someone could know me so well and yet I could not place that person in any part of my life. It wasn't until months later when I bumped into her again at the office in which I worked that I recognised her as a workmate. This had a profound impact on me as I could tell through her body language and the way she spoke that she had taken offence at our last meeting. Where once she had been friendly and chatty, she was cold and stand-offish. Obviously the encounter had affected her as much as it had me. I felt embarrassed, and at that time I had no way of explaining myself or my behaviour toward her, so we continued on awkwardly.

The second and most jarring occasion happened while I was out walking around town and a young girl with blonde hair came walking quickly towards me. I noticed that her trajectory was sending her right across my immediate path. She moved to walk in front of me rather than around me and I remember thinking 'she is looking straight at me, can she not see that we will walk into one another if she keeps going?' I moved to step aside to let her pass. It was quite a strange sensation which I remember well. It seemed surreal to me because this girl was not acting in a way that made sense. Walking right up and stopping in my path, she looked straight at me and smiled and I thought that was strange too. It wasn't until she opened her mouth and said 'Hi mum!' that I realised that it was my own daughter.

So, once I had come to the conclusion that, as a prosopagnosic, seeing works differently for me compared to others, I was interested in investigating how seeing *works*. There is nothing that can be found that is biologically lacking in my vision besides being a little short-sighted. I have no problem seeing the face of someone standing in front of me: I see eyes and nose and chin. I know the colour of somebody's hair and that they have a pimple on their forehead. My interest lays in the very nature of seeing and of looking, and pondering the similarities, the differences and the distinctions between the two.

I wonder as I look at someone, what is it that I am missing? What is the reason that I cannot visually make sense of facial information, to see the face before me in such a way as to be able to recall at a later date? I wonder this, because I can see the person before me. There is

nothing wrong with my vision in that sense. Am I then seeing the information differently? Am I storing the information in another way? Why is it that I can recognise things but not faces? Why do I have difficulty recognising some people over and over again, no matter how well I know them?

One thing that I have become aware of is the fact that I can recognise some people by noticing things about them besides their facial features. This can include height, how they walk or particular irregularities such as an unusual hair colour or cut. Context is a major factor; if I am expecting to see someone somewhere, I am more likely to recognise them.

My research began as an inquiry into how we all see differently, but became an investigation into how we can be looking at precisely the same thing and be seeing it differently. This is not about interpretation but actually about seeing things differently. It is not about perspective or experience but rather about how we look at something and how it is not one thing but many things and how some of those things are possibly not even there. My interest lies in how I might be able to explore the different ways in which we might be looking and seeing.

In this exegesis I will begin by introducing the philosophical writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Here I will outline his ideas surrounding language, communication and the formation of mental images. I will introduce Wittgenstein's theories of aspect seeing including the dawning of an aspect and the noticing of an aspect. I will also discuss the distinction Wittgenstein makes between different kinds of seeing and address the image of the duck-rabbit Wittgenstein used as an example of an image being seen as more than one thing.

Chapter Two explores Maurice Blanchot's essay *The Gaze of Orpheus* (1907) and the parallels that can be made between Wittgenstein's description of the dawning or noticing of an aspect and Blanchot's ideas surrounding inspiration, looking and seeing. I will introduce how it might be possible that there is a third or non-existent space in which we can see and how it might be opened up between two or more images.

In the third chapter I examine specific artworks and methodologies used by contemporary artists John Baldessari and John Stezaker. I begin by looking at the similarities between Baldessari's methodology and the way he uses images and Wittgenstein's theory of aspect seeing. I then discuss two of Stezaker's collages and attempt to deconstruct his method of interrupting images and reflect upon how these interruptions are achieved.

The last chapter focuses on my own collaged works. I cover my reasons for using specific source material and how I have incorporated the ideas and influences set out above into my final exhibition works. I challenge the assumption that an image is static and that what we see or how we look is the same for all of us.

Chapter One
Wittgenstein: Breaking Rules, Seeing Aspects and the Duck-Rabbit

Ludwig Wittgenstein was an Austrian-British philosopher born in Vienna in 1889. His studies revolved around the logic of mathematics and he believed the same logic could be applied to thought and our use of language. His early work culminated in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* first published in 1921, and outlined Wittgenstein's picture theory of language. Although there is no space in this exegesis to delve into the depths of Wittgenstein's first philosophical explorations, it is appropriate to give a general summery of his earlier philosophic writings.

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein put forward the idea that when a person described a situation to another person, they related to the information, not as language or words but rather as information conjured up internally as picture images. Wittgenstein explained that the picture images each person conjured up from a description were often not the same. For example, upon being asked to imagine a bird, one person might see the internal picture image as a dove whilst the other might see the bird as a raven. Wittgenstein claims that it was in this limitless space of possible interpretations that difficulties in communication occurred and this lead to constant misunderstandings. The *Tractatus* was essentially formed from Wittgenstein's premise that most philosophical problems arise from misunderstandings of the logic of language (Richter n.d.).

Using a formula simular to mathematical logic, Wittgenstein argued that if the same logic was applied to language, then by using language in a logical manner, one person should be able to accurately describe a situation to another, so much so, that the exact situation could be created as an exact image in another's mind, 'According to the *Tractatus*', Roger Scruton (1981) suggests, 'everything that can be thought can also be said. The limits of language are, therefore, the limits of thought'.

In the winter of 1936 Wittgenstein began work on his second book *Philosophical Investigations*. The ideas that Wittgenstein was working with at this time appeared to contradict ideas he had put forward in the *Tractatus*. While Wittgenstein was 'still interested in questions concerning meaning and the limits of significant utterance' he remained frustrated with what he saw as 'the fallible effort of human communication' (Scruton 1981). In his writings in *Philosophical Investigations* he declared that all thought, including philosophical thought, is ultimately limited by what might be regarded as the rules of language, and that we only see that which we have been trained to see and that we are compelled to see through the frame of our training in language. Wittgenstein came to believe that mankind's construction of a way to communicate as accurately as possible with each other, was responsible for rules of language that had eventually become invisible to us with regular use, but whose existence makes it almost impossible to communicate absolutely. Travis Denneson (1999) writes that in *Philosophical Investigations* 'Wittgenstein's aim [was] to dissolve the conceptual confusions in philosophy which lead us astray and compel us to impose certainties upon the world that do not really exist'.

Denneson went on to say that;

> Wittgenstein's "method", if we want to call it that, tends to be characterized by examining the various philosophical issues of his day in ways that no one before has. He tries to actually *look* at how things are, rather than think about how things must be according to various *a priori* philosophical principles.

Ohad Nachtomy (1997) author of *Wittgenstein on Forming Concepts and Seeing Aspects* explains that when we follow a rule in language or thought we are not able to conceive that other possibilities exist, we become blind to them. In following a rule we do not make a decision to choose between x, y or z, we simply do x without ever seeing the existence of y or z. Nachtomy says Wittgenstein made a distinction 'between a proposition about reality and a proposition about the methods (or the rules) of describing reality'. In other words, by following language and thought rules, without understanding they are only rules and not reality, we are blinded to other possible realities. 'The illusion is in transforming the rule from a principle organizing the description of reality into a proposition about reality' (Nachtomy 1997). Rules in philosophical discourse involving language were made by changing the status and use of empirical propositions- propositions based on experiment and observation- to those based in the theory of language. Wittgenstein claimed that those rules of language had become prescriptive rather than descriptive.

Further challenging the assumption that language is our best form of clear communication, Wittgenstein argues that when we are in conversation with each other, some words and expressions that we use say nothing at all, instead he claims, they give us pictures. He further proposes that the picture image we conjure has no power in itself and has no meaning on its own, but that it is merely the leaping off point into an investigation of thought (Aldrich 1958). Wittgenstein states, 'we do not judge the pictures, we judge by means of pictures, we do not investigate them, we use them to investigate something else' (Nachtomy 1997). In my own studio practice I explore how the 'investigat[ion] of something else' might also apply when we look at or are shown images. This will be investigated later again in a later chapter where I consider the work of John Baldessari. Meanwhile, I would like to pay some attention to the example Wittgenstein used to clarify his hypothesis concerning the seeing of aspects, in particular his example of the image of the duck-rabbit (Plate 1).

The duck-rabbit is a drawing that Wittgenstein found in a newspaper in which it is possible to see both a rabbit and a duck. A viewer might see it first as one or the other and also possibly, but not necessarily, both. Denneson (1999) notes, that when we have no awareness that the duck-rabbit image can be seen in two different ways, we see it as only a duck or a rabbit and when describing it to another, we don't say 'I see it as a duck', we say 'I see a duck'. We do this because we are unaware that there are alternative ways of seeing the image. In other words, we keep within the rules that an image is, and can only be, one thing. We are unaware that we are able to see the image in other ways. I am drawn to the notion that if we are looking at an image at the same time as another person and we see a duck and they see a rabbit, we are essentially looking at the same thing and seeing it differently. Furthermore, if we say to the other person 'it is a duck' and they say 'no, it is a

rabbit' we may then be prompted to look for an aspect of the image whereby it could be seen as a rabbit. In my studio work I investigate how the viewer might be prompted without outside cues, how they might be prompted to keep looking at the work.

Part 515 of *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953) states; 'when I am looking at [a] photograph, I don't tell myself 'That could be seen as a human being'. Nor when I am looking at an F do I say: 'That could be taken for an F'. Denneson claims that it would be wrong to say that the picture duck and the picture rabbit look the same, because they are two completely different pictures and that it is impossible to view both pictures at the same time. Wittgenstein points to the language we use to describe what we are seeing when we recognise both the duck and the rabbit that the image is 'now a duck, now a rabbit,' as though by seeing one, the other disappears. Following on from here I am led to thinking about what happens in the time that exists between recognising one image and becoming aware of the other. I see it as a third space that exists between seeing one image and the other, where both images are at some point visible and also not visible, as a moment in our looking that one image slips into the other. There is something here that is tied to our knowing about the possibility of the existence of a second image that allows for the seeing of it to happen.

Wittgenstein has used the terms *noticing* and *dawning* when referring to the moment that exists before the seeing of an aspect; a concept which I have explored further in the development of my own work in particular its correlation and relationship with Maurice Blanchot's interpretation of the state of inspiration in his essay *The Gaze of Orpheus* (1907).

Chapter Two
The Gaze of Orpheus: Inspiration and a Third Space

When Orpheus descends to Eurydice, art is the power that causes the night to open.

The Gaze of Orpheus, Blanchot (1907)

I would suggest that Maurice Blanchot's essay *The Gaze of Orpheus* enables the further exploration of Wittgenstein's theory. Although the story speaks of love and is ultimately a comment on the workings of inspiration, it can also be seen as an analogy of a space that exists between two realities; an object/thing seen briefly as one thing and then disappearing replaced by something else, never remaining one or the other. The story of Orpheus becomes an enquiry into what both is and isn't, and it is in this way that I am reminded of Wittgenstein's dawning of an aspect. I first see it this way and then I see it that way.

Noel Fleming (1957) in his paper *Recognizing and Seeing As* describes this as an experience of recognition. 'Sometimes,' he says, 'when we say that we recognize something, we mean to refer to a change in the character or quality of our experience: what we recognize looks different after we recognized it from the way it looked before.'

In *The Gaze of Orpheus*, Orpheus is in love with Eurydice yet he is unable, or forbidden, to look at her directly. She is his inspiration but she is also interpreted as inspiration itself;

> Eurydice is the limit of what art can attain; concealed behind a name and covered by a veil, she is the profoundly dark point which art, desire, death, and the night all seem to lead. She is the instant in which the essence of the night approaches as the *other* night.

Orpheus, in looking at her, at perceiving her, knowing the reality of her, loses the realms of possibility that exist in the *not* knowing; the creative act of being able to let the imagination go anywhere, unanchored, believing anything. As such, by attempting to gaze upon Eurydice, Orpheus risks losing the very inspiration she conjures. He can only be inflamed by Eurydice into creating the work by catching glimpses of her;

> He can descend to it, he can draw it to him –an even stronger power- and he can draw it upward, but only by keeping his back turned to it. This turning away is the only way he can approach it…

Blanchot likens this inability to gaze directly at what inspires us to a veil that exists between life and death, between believing and knowing, night and day and heaven and hell. The veil is everything, it separates what we know from what is unknown. The veil is what Orpheus sees, not Eurydice, and the veil protects him as much as it does her. Orpheus bumps up against this veil, which he perceives as a concealment of truth; he longs to see all that it obscures. He 'turns around', and Blanchot goes on to tell us that 'Orpheus has actually been turned to Eurydice all along: he saw her when she was invisible and he touched her intact, in her absence as a shade, in that veiled presence of her infinite absence.' Here we see a mirroring of Wittgenstein's assertion that we all have the ability to perceive aspects and that noticing aspects is being reminded of something that we already know.

When Orpheus turns around to look at Eurydice he realises that he already knew what he was going to see before seeing it because he had already imagined it. But in the act of looking, in the scrutinising of Eurydice he can no longer imagine and therefore he loses his inspiration. This is the precipice from where Orpheus falls into darkness and ironically this is Wittgenstein's dawning of an aspect. At the moment of seeing Eurydice, Orpheus has sensed that it is only in the longing to know the unknown, in the *wish* to know but not the actual knowing that the inspiration lies. Orpheus is standing in the space that exists between not knowing and knowing, and he recognises that moment. I liken the space that Orpheus stands to Wittgenstein's dawning of an aspect. The dawning of an aspect is the space/moment which could be considered a time and a place. It is the juncture between looking at an image and the recognition of an aspect within the image, something previously known to us that reveals itself and changes what it is we are seeing.

My research pursues this sliver of time that exists for Orpheus; when he senses the knowledge coming upon him before he has the knowledge, before it becomes a part of him. It is the dawning. When what we are about to know arrives to meet us. Wittgenstein states that this type of '…*seeing as* has the queer status of being "half visual experience, half thought"' (Hester 1966). I wonder if the viewer can be led to drawing out that moment when what they are seeing changes into something else, or otherwise drawn into visually moving back and forth between the two images.

Wittgenstein has claimed that not everyone is capable of seeing aspects. Hester, in his paper *Metaphor and Aspect Seeing* further explains that 'the aspect blind person not only is unable to execute an imaginative technique but fails to see something that is there to be seen.' Mulhall also attests that aspect-dawning involves 'something more than merely what is perceived', and furthermore that,

> anyone experiencing the dawning of an aspect is *thinking* of what he sees (Philosophical Investigations, 197c). The characteristic exclamation of aspect-dawning is both a report of what is seen and a cry of surprise or recognition (Philosophical Investigations, 198a); it signals an *occupation* with the object which is the focus of the experience. (Mulhall 1990)

From this perspective one could make the claim that it is in fact Orpheus's inspiration that gives him the *ability* to see Eurydice behind the veil. Hester (1966) suggests that s*eeing as* 'is like seeing in that the aspect is there in the figure, accessible to all normal observers: it is unlike seeing in that it requires mastery of an imaginative technique.'

In the simplest of explanations and at the most basic understanding of the term 'seeing-as' would be described as,

> commonly used in a general and informal sense, to describe distinct and sometimes dramatically contrasting visual experiences of a physical object or collection of physical objects, that may be undergone by an individual observer without any change in the objects themselves. (Scott 1998, p. 93)

But it is more than that. Nachtomy (1997) suggests that Wittgenstein deliberately uses the drawing of the duck-rabbit to draw our attention, by obvious example, to aspect-dawning. By doing this he leads us to realise that we are surrounded by opportunities to see new aspects in all things all the time. He shows us how as viewers we might start pushing against the rules of seeing.

Orpheus, in the moment of knowing what knowing will mean, chooses Eurydice and for him that means death, for he can no longer be the storyteller. Orpheus can no longer believe in the magic, because he sees there is no magic, only truth. He can no longer make magic. His impatience to know has taken that ability away from him. Yet, by knowingly casting aside the story he has been searching for, the art made of the inspiration, Orpheus *becomes* the never ending story and ties his fate to Eurydice for ever more. It is in Orpheus's death that he becomes immortal. It is in his failure that his success exists.

> For Orpheus, then, everything sinks into the certainty of failure, where the only remaining compensation is the uncertainty of the work –for does the work ever exist? As we look at the most certain masterpiece, whose beginning dazzles us with its brilliance and decisiveness, we find that we are also faced with something that is fading away, a work that has suddenly become invisible again, is no longer there, and has never been there. This sudden eclipse is the distant memory of Orpheus' gaze, it is a nostalgic return to the uncertainty of the origin. (Blanchot 1907, p. 108)

Orpheus's inability (failure) to resist destroying his *inspiration* (the work) brought upon by his love (desire/fascination) of Eurydice ultimately becomes the inspiration for the story *of* Orpheus. Blanchot touches on this duality throughout his essay. When Orpheus attempts to take hold of that which he has been told he must not touch, he risks losing the work for that which has inspired it, he is told 'You will only be able to keep me [the work, the inspiration] if you do not look at *her*.' In much the same way Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit exists in an impossible duality where the duck can only exist if we are not looking at the rabbit.

This slippage back and forth happens to what we are seeing and not what we are looking at, yet at the same time it is something that happens to our looking and not our seeing. Here again we have a duality. It is in the absence of one [image] that the other exists so neither is truly *there*. Much like for Orpheus, it is in the *dawning* of the moment of the viewers knowing of the existence of the other [image], on that precipice of knowledge between that which Blanchot called the *inspiration* and the reality of Eurydice, that alludes to the fact that we can be looking at the same thing, describing the same thing and still be seeing something different.

Orpheus's initial inspiration could be seen to only exist within a vacuum. It is his imagining of Eurydice that fires the work rather than Eurydice herself and the knowing of her that threatens it. In the following chapter I will discuss the work of John Baldessari and his use of negative space to create a similar type of vacuum where the viewer might be inspired to create and finish the work.

Chapter Three
John Baldessari: Arms and Legs and Parts and Spaces

I have been fascinated by the work of John Baldessari for quite some time. Beyond an aesthetic and intellectual interest in the processes behind Baldessari's work, I like the way he seems to simplify complex ideas about art. There seems to me to be a lovely parallel between Baldessari's oeuvre as it stands and the written works of Wittgenstein. Both Baldessari and Wittgenstein seem to have come from the starting place of an inquiry into language, focussing specifically on our use of words to communicate ideas.

Wittgenstein's investigations began because he was frustrated with what he saw as the shortfall in the clarity of verbal communication. Wittgenstein used visual puzzles to identify problems in communication due to language while Baldessari deconstructed sentences and played with and pointed out visually the literalness with which we use words as communicative tools. Baldessari deliberately defied and challenged words and sentences, drawing attention to our reliance on and the weaknesses of such methods of communication. Both investigated how words, set alongside images, could mean different things and could be seen in ways we were not familiar with. Wittgenstein used mental images, for Baldessari it was the descriptive names of paint colours. Both ended up separating words from images and working with the premise that images on their own, without words, could be seen in multiple ways.

In Baldessari's Coloured Dot series including works such as *Cutting Ribbon* (1988) (Plate 2) he repurposes small coloured dots, the kind you might find being used as price tags in a second hand shop, and places them over the faces of the people in black and white photographs that he had found and collected over time. He did this 'so that attention could be paid to other areas of the pictures' (Weissman 2009). What impressed me most about these works was that I immediately felt the need to recreate those missing faces in my mind. As someone with face-blindness this struck me as amusing. I found myself without the assistance of facial expressions or other facial information, just as I do in real life, looking at what the bodies were doing and the positions they were in. I began paying attention to the environment in which they were set, and I found myself constructing and imagining how those faces must look. In my mind, using what clues were available to me, I completed the image. Eventually I realised my imagined image may have been completely wrong and upon this realisation, it occurred to me that I had come across a clever trick. Observing Baldessari's dot pictures, it is what has been taken away from the image that seems to take on the greatest importance. We can't help but wonder what has been cut out, covered over, hidden from us and obscured from our sight. We mentally try to replace or recover what was there to be seen; it is what is absent that becomes our most pressing thought.

It is interesting that when contemplating Baldessari's work we tend to become more fascinated, more involved and concerned with the spaces that we can't see than the things we can. Baldessari went on to use the remains of the pictures and photographs which he had cut, using negative space as a frame or viewfinder through which to deliberately disrupt the way he might then look at other images (Baldessari and Varnedoe 1994). Leslie Jones, curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), describes Baldessari's works as

'leaving out critical information'. With the viewer only being given only the relatively minor and superficial aspects, they are left to look only peripherally at the images. The spaces left empty become areas to be filled. Baldessari points out that this technique is in reference to a literary device that uses a stand in, or the description of just a part of something, instead of the whole. 'You can allude to something and they [the viewer] can fill in the blanks' (Artists Interviews///John Baldessari 2016). I would liken what Baldessari describes as the viewer filling in the blanks to the viewer noticing aspects.

In his work *Arms and Legs (specif. Elbows and Knees), etc.: Blue Torso and Pink Arm* (Plate 3) Baldessari uses the same technique of blocking out parts of an image or images but also expands on its use as a function. This time not only have the faces in the found photographs been removed but so has the backgrounds (environment) and most of the body or bodies. The remains of the image or images (we don't know whether these parts have come from the same whole as there is no reference point) are stripped of substance. What is left are the subtle gestures and positions of the lingering body parts as a suggestion to what may have been contained in the original image.

I am aware when looking at Baldessari's *Blue Torso and Pink Arm* that the pink shape is an arm. I see that this disembodied arm has a hand that is resting on the torso's shoulder. My eye is drawn to the meeting point of the hand and the shoulder. I notice this particular aspect within the work. The gesture is familiar to me, it is one of condolence or possibly, reassurance. Although these things do not exist within the image, it is the image I see. If I had not known the name of the work I might have understood the arm to be merely a pink shape. If I was particularly imaginative I might have seen it as a tongue or noticing that the blue shape is that of an upper torso and the pink shape was joined to where the neck might be on the torso, I might have seen it as a tie. Although it might not be an obvious comparison, I feel that this experience connects to Wittgenstein's description of seeing an aspect. An example would be as follows, I see a picture of people with faces obscured by dots. I begin to notice its likeness to another picture, image or circumstance I have previously seen, and I mentally fill in the faces/expressions.

According to Wittgenstein aspects exist in all images and we all have the capacity to see various aspects of the same thing, but he also provides us with two uses of the word see;

> The one; "What do you see there?"- "I see this" (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other: "I see the likeness between these two faces"… I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice it's likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. (Nachtomy 1997)

In other words, when, in my experience of looking at Baldessari's *Arms and Legs (specif. Elbows and Knees), etc.: Blue Torso and Pink Arm*, I notice an aspect within the image which is not so much something in the image itself but how I relate it to other images I have experienced. The noticing of an aspect will necessarily fluctuate, it moves back and forth. An aspect might dawn on me, I notice it, and then it might pass. I refer back to Wittgenstein when he stated 'we do not judge the pictures, we judge by means of pictures, we do not investigate them, we use them to investigate something else.' It doesn't mean that my thoughts have changed or that my visual experience has changed, only that I was reminded

of something else momentarily and so I saw the image or the picture as something else. I saw it as having more than one quality and so it changed for me. The image has moved in some way or reshaped itself in my mind although I still see it in its original form. In this way, the image I am seeing, or at least the aspect of the image I am looking at, is there for all to see but not necessarily seen by all. At the same time there may be aspects to the image that others might see that I am not able to see. It is in the act of the viewer *filling in the gaps* that different possible aspects reveal themselves. It is the viewer who is in charge of what image is being seen, led by inspiration like Orpheus, from something that is unable to be looked at directly.

The ability of images to cease being static, and therefore as being able to conjure a sense of movement, is a characteristic I have focussed on exploring in my studio work and is an aspect found in images that is expertly exploited in the collage works of John Stezaker.

Chapter Four
John Stezaker: Interruptions and hidden messages

I had already started on my own collage works when I came across the work of John Stezaker. His work was mentioned as a likeness and comparison to the work of Baldessari and I remember being quite taken by his collage *Mask XLVI* (2007). The work consisted simply, of a coloured landscape postcard of a river in the English countryside laid over the top of a black and white photographic portrait of an old-time film star. This is a process which Stezaker has described as an interruption.

Interruptions he says, stop the viewer from looking through the image, for example in a landscape where the viewer looks from foreground to background or from side to side. This, he says, forces us to look *at* the image. The viewer is then encouraged to look at what else the image is made up of whether it be colours, shapes and/or lines. Reminiscent of Wittgenstein challenging the rules surrounding language, Stezaker claims that interruptions break the habit of how we relate to an image. By causing interruptions Stezaker reveals how an image can be seen as more than one thing and pointing out how as viewers, we are able to see things differently. He encourages the viewer to change the way in which they look at an image therefore changing the way in which they see. We are overloaded with images he says, so much so that we become blind to them and are unable to take them in consciously. Stezaker attempts to use the phenomenon of aspect seeing as part of his work. Whether or not he does this deliberately is unknown, but he does seem to refer to the qualities of noticing an aspect when he speaks about his work. In a lecture he gave at the Chelsea College of Arts (Dennis 2015) he declares, 'when I say that the shape of the mountain is the same as a head, I have been lead there by the other image. I am seeing the possibilities in the image of the mountain rather than the mountain.'

Stezaker claims that there is a mystery in the heart of images, a life we often do not see. He reveals this in works such as *Mask (Film Portrait Collage) CLVIII* (2013) (Plate 4). In this image we see the black and white portrait of a young female movie star whose face is mostly obscured by the placement of a coloured landscape postcard depicting a broad waterfall set in the countryside. On the banks of the river and beside the waterfall is a stone house with a waterwheel. At least this is what we see when we look at the postcard as a postcard. If we consider other aspects of the postcard and if we are able to, as Stezaker puts it, stop the viewer looking *through* the image, and instead look *at* the image, we notice that the rocks in the river below the stone house resemble a closed and bashful eye. Looking at the placement of the broad waterfall the viewer may be momentarily reminded of a short fringed hairstyle that was fashionable amongst movie starlets of the era. And so, in being reminded of the hairstyle it begins to be seen within the work. A river becomes hair and a bridge becomes an eye. To paraphrase Wittgenstein when he asks; what do you see? I see a likeness between these two images. I contemplate them together as one possible image and suddenly notice a likeness in the bridge and waterfall of a woman's eyes and brow. I see that the images have not changed and yet I see them differently. It is only in the viewers noticing of these aspects of the images that they begin to emerge.

At no time do we see the face of the movie actress in question (in fact Stezaker mostly used portraits of unknown actors and actresses for this reason) and yet it is as though we see her features in the slippage that happens when we look at the lines and shapes that make up the image in the postcard. The tree-line that runs along the left side of the river takes the place of the shadow that we assume must exist along the nose for example. This experience of looking refers again back to Wittgenstein when he states that *seeing as* is 'half visual experience, half thought' and what Baldessari calls 'filling in the blanks'. I would suggest that by causing interruptions as Stezaker does in his work, the viewer is forced to take notice of the images in two ways. Firstly, by being drawn towards noticing aspects that might be contained within the portrait image, even though we are unable to look at it directly (we can't see an eye but we can imagine it could be there). Secondly, looking at the image causing the interruption by forces us to take notice of the aspects contained within the image that we are able to use in more than one way, such as the arch of a bridge which could stand in for the shape of an eyebrow.

This experience occurs, according to Wittgenstein, because we are reminded of something we have already seen. For example, at some point in my life I have seen a similar image of a woman with that hairstyle and downcast eyes, so I am able to notice these aspects of the postcard that fill in the spaces missing in the portrait photograph in the work discussed above. Stezaker has described this as 'extracting hidden messages from the proliferation of images' (Billingham, Williams & Ferrari 1997).

Although there has been much said here about the indecisive state of the image, I feel that it needs to be pointed out that although we are speaking sometimes of individual images, we are referring to our interaction with those individual images in conjunction with other images.

In his paper *The Image Beside the Image and the Image Within the Image; Prolegomena to an Approach to the Collages of John Stezaker* (2010) Michael Newman tries to untangle the philosophy of thought surrounding what we mean when we talk about the image. Although there is not the space to thoroughly examine the whole of his premise here, I would like to highlight some of the points he puts forward. Newman firstly points out that in philosophical thought, the image has mostly been considered as being individual, or in single status. He also argues that in discussion of the image, reference to *the image* is often substituted for the discussion of actual images.

Newman concentrates on the relation of images to each other and furthermore claims that there are specifically two kinds of relation. The first is what he defines as 'the image within the image such as an image concealed in a landscape or an ambiguous figure such as the famous duck-rabbit. Second, the image beside the image, or collage'.

In works such as *Mask (Film Portrait Collage) CLVIII* and *The Way VI* (2014) (Plate 5) images are aligned in such a way that slippage occurs in the 'seams and fissures' (Smythe 2011) where two images meet and in the looking between one image and the other so that 'we are induced to read the image of the body as simultaneously one and more than one.' Newman poses this as a relationship between the collaboration of two or more images and

makes the distinction that they are far from being 'two disparate images violently juxtaposed', rather pointing out that the images in this case are both 'joined at a point of similarity' and 'separated and joined', allowing the viewer to '[absorb] the image before realizing what is going on'. 'The superimposed image, by aligning itself [or being aligned] with a shape in the other image, opens up a space within it.' At the same time, Newman questions whether 'the change take[s] place in the viewer or the image?' and comes to the conclusion that 'whatever the case may be, the image changes without any material change in its figure' (Newman 2010). I refer here once again to Wittgenstein when he says 'I see the image has not changed but I see it differently'. In other words, the image has remained static but I am seeing a different image.

Chapter Five
Exploration, inspiration and the continuous movement of a static image

My studio explorations were based upon producing specific outcomes. I wanted to demonstrate that a viewer could be looking at an image and see something different to the viewer who was standing next to them. However, I also wanted the viewer to be aware that it was possible that the viewer next to them could be seeing something different. My goal was to have each viewer know that the work could be viewed differently. I began working with the assumption that 'the viewer does not judge the pictures, but uses them to investigate something else' as claimed earlier by Wittgenstein and that the viewer tends to fill in the blanks, as noted by Baldessari.

I had been working with collage for a while as a way of stimulating creativity and new ideas in my studio practice and had gathered a small collection of magazines that included two *National Geographic* magazines. One of those magazines was quite recent and the other was from sometime in the 1960's. When using images from those two magazines together I was struck by the different qualities of each. Coming from a photographic background I was interested in noticing the different styles of the photographs contained in the magazines but also the contrast between colourisation, print quality and photographic realism. I discovered that this change was due to the digitisation of photographic and printing practices over the years. Older National Geographic photographs had been taken with film, more specifically Kodak Kodachrome film, which has been described as 'a film which was to color slides what the saxophone was to jazz' (Friend 2012). Up until 1978, *National Geographic* was printed by four-color process letterpress, a process that separates an image into four plates of different colours, cyan, yellow, magenta, and black. Each colour plate was produced using a screen at a different angle so that the dot of ink sat next to each other rather than on top of one another. This process of printing created a very distinctive look in the colour of the photographs and on close inspection had the effect of making the photographs look quite painterly. I was really taken by the texture and colour of the Kodachrome/four-colour processed photographs and decided to work solely with photographs sourced from *National Geographic* magazines published from this time.

Commencing work on my collages, I started by directly incorporating the techniques and aspects that I have outlined as being used by both Baldessari and Stezaker as well as experimenting with the compositions in other ways. I began by collecting images that I thought might have a strong central focus on either a person or a particular shape. I looked for interesting shadows within the pictures and sought out images that might be visually separated into distinctive layers such as foreground, middle ground and background. I was thinking how being able to visually divide the images into sections would allow me to manipulate how the spaces within the images were looked at. I wondered whether I might be able to make the foreground look like a background or at least create a type of push and pull between those spaces. I followed Baldessari's method of 'looking for those details, those bits of information that for whatever reason grab one's visual attention at a particular moment…things that seemed to be oddities…' (Artists Interviews///John Baldessari 2016).

Some of the images were chosen purely because I found the image attracted me in some way, sometimes for aesthetic reasons or because there was an interesting story being told.

I began looking at the images I had collected and searching for a particular shape within them that might be cut out and make for an interesting frame or viewfinder. I was being quite conscious of negative space, or what could be turned into negative space while I was searching through the images. I was aware of what it was that I might take away from each image I examined and what would spark the interest of, or possibly even puzzle the viewer. I felt that focussing on the negative space elements of the image lent itself further to the image being able to be looked at in more than one way.

For example, the exhibition work *Cowboy Hats and Hands* (2017) began with a photograph of a cowboy which was taken through a screen door. The angle of the sun behind him cast a shadow on the screen giving him a doubled outline. I started to cut out the figure of the cowboy but quickly realised that if I cut out the shadow he was casting, it would leave me with more interesting shapes and lines and a negative space that was not so obvious. The outline of the cowboy remained, only his shadow was gone. I used this cut-out shape then as a frame in which I could hold over other pictures I had collected to see what, if anything, interesting happened. Often I might go through a hundred images and have only two or three of them connect together, looking at whether they spoke to each other through line, shape or colour. Unlike Baldessari, I didn't want to leave the negative space empty. I was interested in filling that space with a picture that was obviously not attached to the first image but was in some way allowing a conversation to develop between the two. My main focus was matching images in which I thought would lead the viewer into seeing two or more aspects between them.

In the case of *Cowboy Hats and Hands*, the viewer is drawn first to the face of Albert Laughter, a park ranger wearing sun glasses and a hat. At first glance it appears that he his shading his eyes from the sun but on closer inspection we realise that the hand we see is much too small to belong to him and that it is also not his hat. It is between the two images that another space opens up. Our looking moves back and forth, it circles through the two layered photographs from face to hand to hat and back to face never fully landing on either image but somewhere in-between. It is then that we notice the black and white hands that are holding the picture. In this instance we are looking down into the image. Where we thought we were looking across the image, we are suddenly looking down into it because we notice the feet belonging to the hands holding the photograph. Because our looking is constantly moving, each time it moves we see a different aspect, we can reasonably assume that each viewer is seeing something different and it is also possible that some viewers will see further or fewer aspects than others.

Similarly, in the exhibition work *Tv Face and Camera Eyes* (2017) we see the figure of a woman crouched on the ground, her head, shoulders and torso covered by an old style television set. The coloured striped bands, projecting from the screen are reminiscent of old standby screens. However, we soon see someone and we see that they are looking at us. I like the idea of being looked at by something we are looking at, but in this case it is visually confusing because the body we see is turned away from us. This gives the impression that

we are only just being seen by those eyes, that the woman we are looking at was busy paying attention to something *over there,* she noticed us and briefly glanced our way. It is after that that we notice the camera and the hand and maybe the fact that the face we see does not belong to the body. That, on second thought, the eyes are much too big and the camera does not belong to her. And yet, the impression becomes one of a woman taking a photograph and also glancing up to the viewer and then going back to taking a photograph. Her eye becomes the camera and looks through the camera. Once again, it is through the visual cycling of the work, looking from one action to another which demonstrates to the viewer that we are able to see the same thing differently. Between the two images of two different women a third space opens up which contains the one woman who is amalgamated from the two. She exists but she doesn't exist. She is there one moment and then she is gone. Like Orpheus looking at Eurydice, committing to looking at any one image within the work destroys the possibility of looking at the other(s).

A different technique to show how an image can be seen in more than one way in a work is used in *Mickey* (2017). With this work I began with a photograph of an autumn tree beside a fenced off field. I had already cut a circle out of the middle of the picture and used it in another work but I really loved the colour and texture of the leaves on the tree and felt there might be some more interesting things to be done. Using the circle as a frame I began to look at how it might connect to other images I had in my collection. Another favourite image I had consisted of what looked to me to be a Romanesque courtyard; cobble stones and a villa in the background that had shaded arches and a barely noticeable person standing on the upper balcony. I had been wanting to use this image but had not found any connections with other images. I hadn't really thought of putting these two together as I didn't feel they had any type of narrative. However, something clicked and I was instantly reminded of something else when I placed one on top of the other.

Looking at the merged work the viewer might notice how the lines of the fence align with the shadow lines in the courtyard and how the shadow of the tree seems to continue onto the cobble stones in the courtyard. There is something that happens in the upper left hand side of the circle where the line of the courtyard meets the upper fence paling and the two photographs seem to merge momentarily. All these things happen within the image, but the thing that stands out most for me is the likeness of the image to Mickey Mouse, an aspect that is rarely seen by other viewers. For me, Mickey's face can be seen in the circle with the two arches serving as eyes, the rock formation in the middle of the courtyard becomes a nose, and the shadow in the foreground which resembles his mouth. Few people have noticed it but once being shown have said that it is something that can't be unseen. I feel that this could be seen as successfully *interrupting* the image in such a way that parallel's interruptions as discussed in the context of Stezaker's work. I also feel that *Mickey* is an excellent example of Wittgenstein's premise that there are always aspects to be seen if we know to look for them and that aspects dawn on us when we are looking at something and are reminded of something else.

Conclusion:

Ludwig Wittgenstein held the belief that the reason we find it difficult to communicate absolutely is because when we try to describe something to someone else our words form as pictures in their minds and the picture they see does not resemble the description we give. Wittgenstein posited that even if the other person was shown the exact image we were describing it was possible that they would see something other than what we were seeing, shown with his example of the duck-rabbit image. He claims that we have been trained to look at images, and with the duck-rabbit he demonstrates how being able to see different aspects within an image leads to the image being seen in more than one way. Wittgenstein's theories concerning aspect seeing, aspect dawning and the noticing of an aspect have formed the framework for this exegesis that investigates how we might look at the same thing and see it differently. In my studio explorations I have used these theories in an attempt to deconstruct what aspects might exist within an image or images and then utilise those aspects to prompt the viewer into seeing more than one thing within an image.

Delving into Maurice Blanchot's *The Gaze of Orpheus* and his description of inspiration and the veil that exists between two worlds has further revealed how the noticing an aspect and aspect dawning might be interpreted. In my works I have looked at ways of deliberately inspiring the viewer to find new aspects within the image using line, colour, narrative perspective as well as negative space to both draw attention to, and draw aside, the veil that separates two or more images.

My research and final exhibition works have shown that there exists the possibility of an image being seen as more than one thing. In examining the works of Baldessari and Stezaker and using them as examples, I present how the viewer can be led to see more within the image than what might be seen at first glance. I have also opened up the possibility of a third image existing between two or more images that, although never quite fully developed as its own image, is definitely experienced by the viewer.

By introducing the viewer to seeing that there may be more than one aspect to an image, I am creating the possibility of the image being seen in multiple ways and by doing this I have shown that we do indeed all see differently.

Exhibition Works:

Mici Boxell

Cowboy Hats and Hands 2017
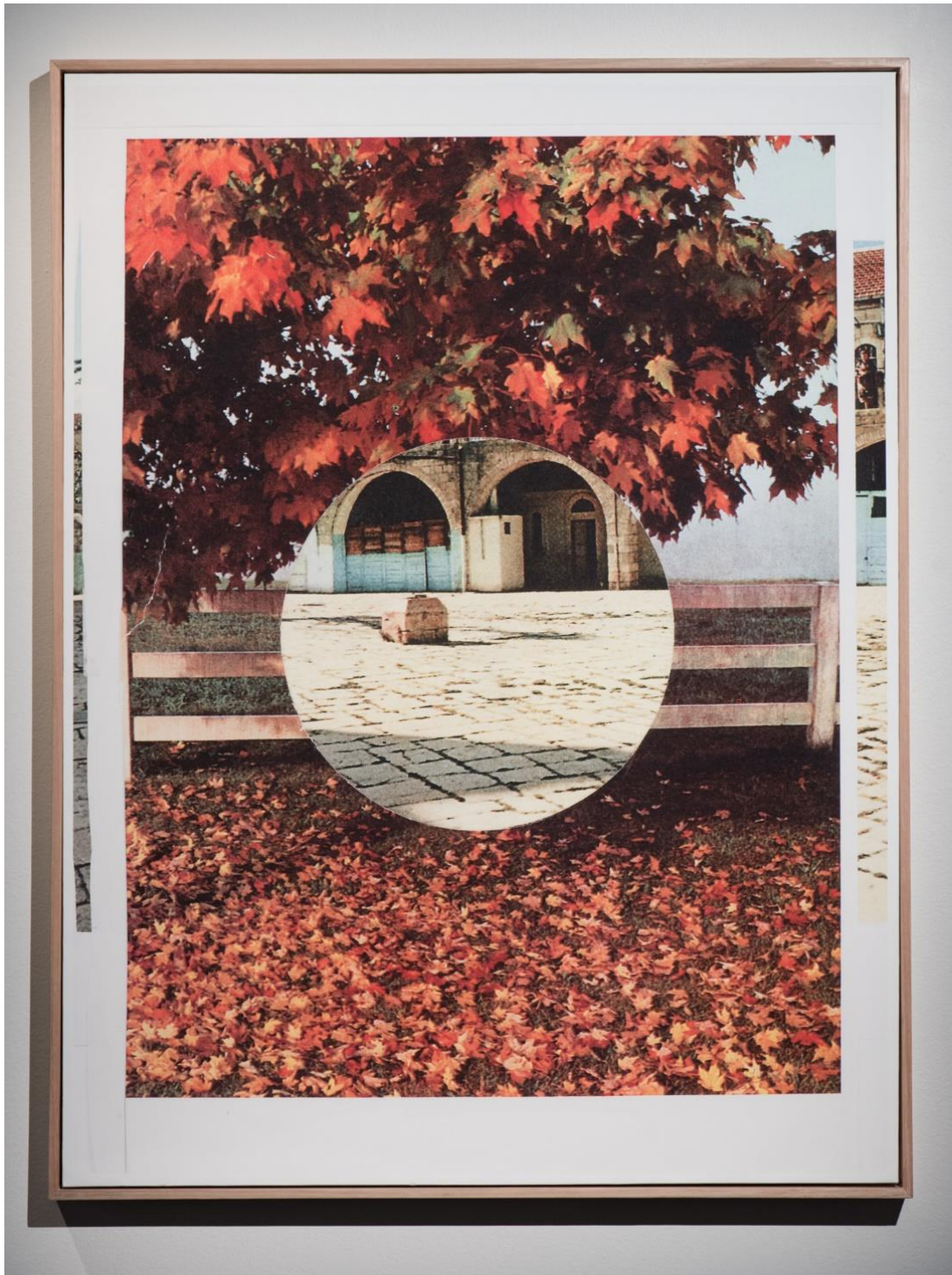
Digital Inkjet Print on rag paper

80cm x 105cm

Mici Boxell

Tv Face and Camera Eyes 2017

Digital Inkjet Print on rag paper
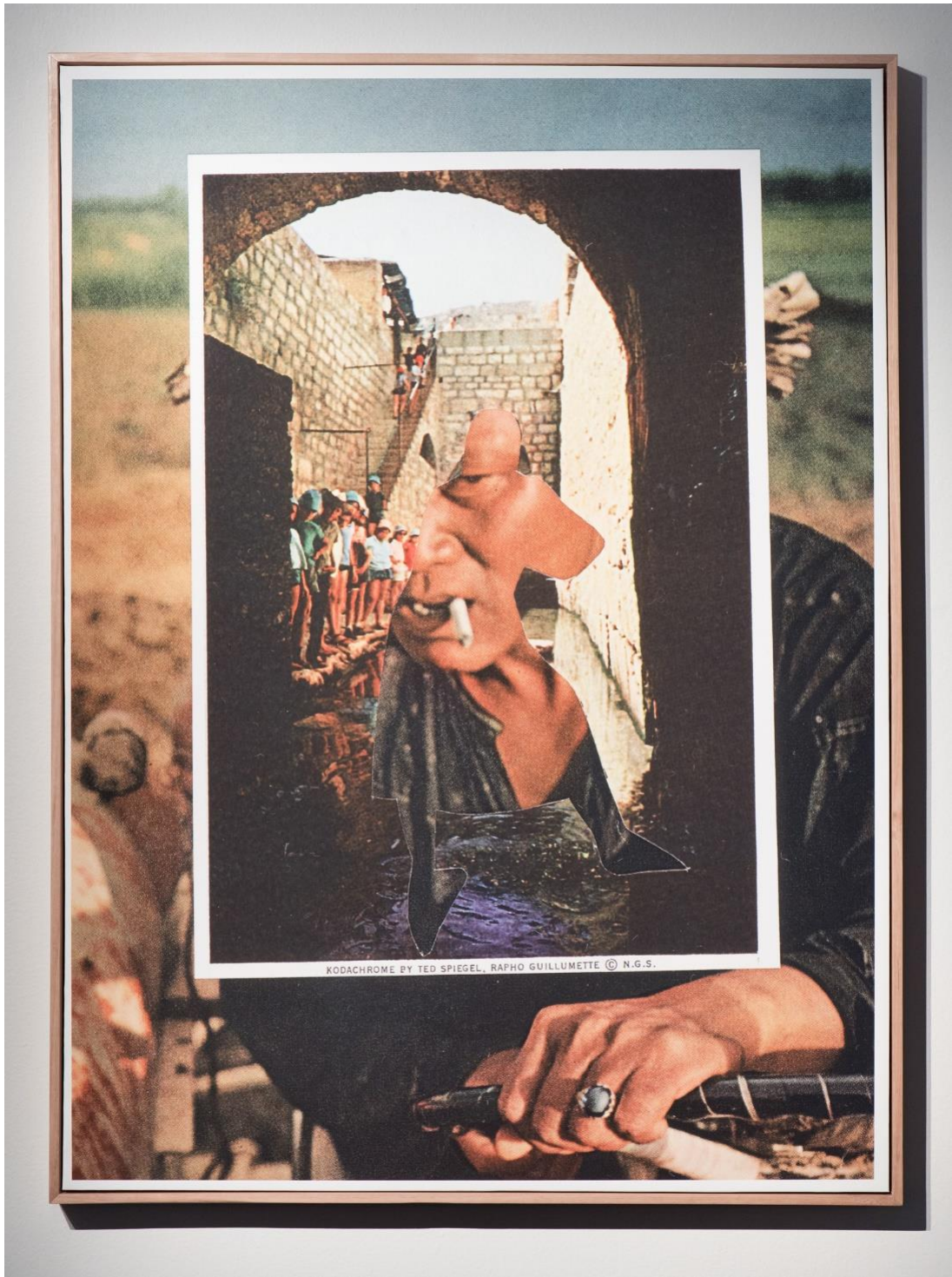
80cm x 102 cm

Mici Boxell

Mickey 2017

Digital Inkjet Print on rag paper

80cm x 102cm

Mici Boxell

The Warrior Farmer 2017
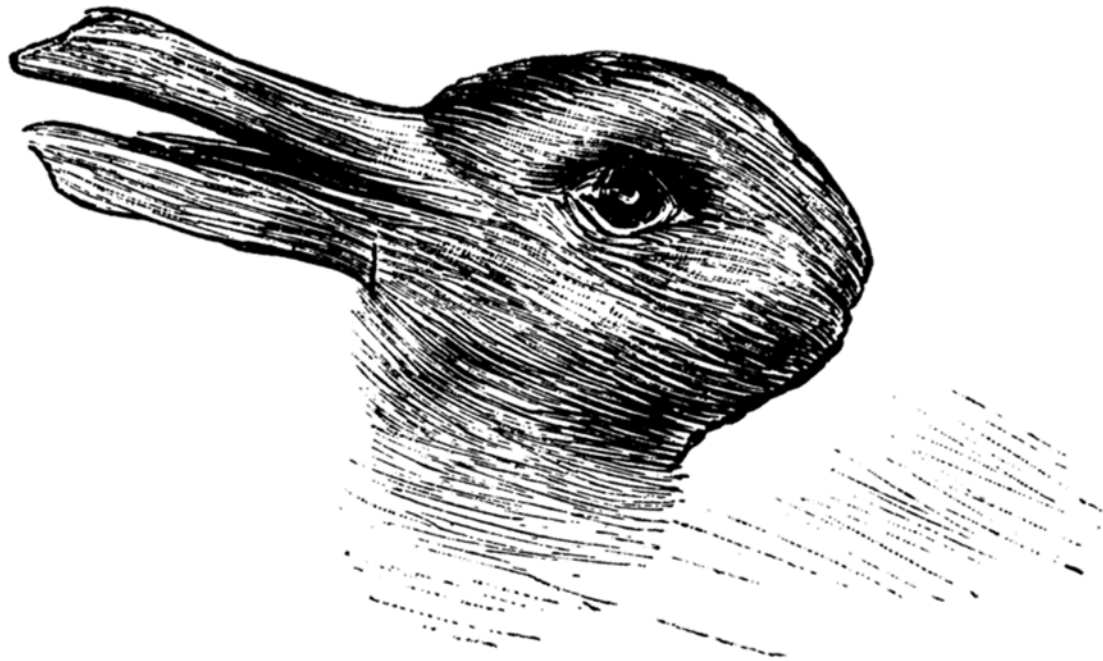
Digital Inkjet Print on rag paper

80cm x 105cm

Mici Boxell

The Business Warrior 2017

Digital Inkjet Print on rag paper

80cm x 102c

Plates

Welche Thiere gleichen ein-
ander am meisten?

Kaninchen und Ente.

Plate 1

Artist Unknown

Welche Thiere gleichen einander am meisten? 1892

Kaninchen und Ente (Rabbit and Duck)

23 October 1892 issue Fliegende Blätter

Plate 2

John Baldessari

Cutting Ribbon 1988

Coloured stickers on found photograph

John Baldessari Studio

Plate 3

John Baldessari

Arms and Legs (specif. Elbows and Knees), etc.: Blue Torso and Pink Arm 2007

Interior Flat Enamel Three Dimensional Archival Print on UV coated Canvas mounted on shaped form with Acrylic paint

Marian Goodman Gallery

Plate 4

John Stezaker

Mask (Film Portrait Collage) CLVIII 2013

Film Portrait Collage

Mendes Wood DM

Plate 5

John Stezaker

The Way VI 2013

Film Still Collage

Mendes Wood DM

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