



Left: Simryn Gill, *Run 9*, C-print (20 x 44 in.), 2006. Courtesy the artist and Tracy Williams, Ltd., New York

Below left: John Stezaker, *Love X*, collage (9 3/5 x 7 3/10 in.), 2006. Courtesy The Approach, London

Simryn Gill: *Run* at Tracy Williams Ltd., New York

A paradise lost was reenvisioned in Sydney-based artist Simryn Gill's exhibition of recent photographs from Pulau Run, one of the smallest of the Banda Islands (also known as the Spice Islands) in Indonesia. The island, which was a significant source of nutmeg in the seventeenth century, was once owned by the British, then traded to the Dutch in 1667 for New Amsterdam

(now Manhattan). Nutmeg trees still grow on the island today, but it is mostly uninhabited.

In black-and-white photographs, Gill portrays Run Island as a desolate relic of the past rather than a tropical paradise. The island looks cool, gray, anonymous. Each piece is impeccably composed; *Run 2s* (2006) stark view of a jetty receding toward a point on the horizon creates an image more forbidding than inviting. Even the color prints of nutmeg trees and tangles of foliage and vegetation remain impenetrable, as if seen through a veil. Past and present appear enmeshed, and any real sense of time has vanished.

Gill seems preoccupied with the notion of the historic artifact—how things were and what they have become—and she continues this investigation in *Untitled* (2006), an installation of books and stacks of austere gray boxes arranged on three long tables in separate space in the gallery. The books are lined up in specific progressions that cleverly address their content: One sequence includes *The Karma of Brown Folk*, *Itinerant Blues*, *The Noble Savage III*, and *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*, and then, a couple of titles down, *A History of British Serial Killing* and *Heart of Darkness*. This idea of classification and grouping is reiterated in the boxes themselves, each containing small sealed

plastic bags of words torn out of the books. Each box's bags of words function as impromptu poetry, with "sleep," "alone," and "box" in one and only "still" in another. In spite of the visual and tactile appeal of the pillowy bags inside the elegant boxes, the words themselves generate about the same level of interest as refrigerator magnet poetry. Yet the overarching focus on context and categorization, tied in with Gill's photographic analysis of a place in time, made this a quietly compelling display.

—Amanda Church

John Stezaker at The Approach, London

Collage is technically what John Stezaker does but somehow the term doesn't quite suit his work. This fifty-something British artist manipulates the publicity stills of mid-twentieth-century actors (most of whom are unfamiliar to contemporary eyes) to create uncanny hybrids of male and female, figure and landscape, Technicolor and black and white. Deletion plays as much a part as addition.

Of the works represented here (all from 2006), *Blind III*, from the "Blind" series, offers the most succinct demonstration of Stezaker's quasi-surgical method. From a full-face, black-and-white photograph of a male star, Stezaker removed a diagonal strip

