

metus



Capturing Social Landscapes

STEPHEN SHORE: SOMETHING + NOTHING
 SPRÜTH MAGERS, LONDON, 26 NOVEMBER - 12 JANUARY

Returning to London in his first solo show for six years in the city, American artist Stephen Shore (b. 1947) uses his camera to uncover beauty in the mundane. Entitled *Something + Nothing* after John Cage's *Lecture on Something* (1951) and *Lecture on Nothing* (1950), the exhibition celebrates a career spanning four decades. Bringing together 65 photographs, including vintage works from the artist's seminal series *American Surfaces* (1972-1973) and *Uncommon Places* (1973-1981), the show displays many images for the first time alongside works from the recent series *Abu Dhabi* (2009) and *Israel* (2010), and the never-before-exhibited series *Ukraine* (2012).

Born and based in New York, Shore has built a unique portrait of America through his practice. His ordinary images have had an extraordinary influence upon the general artistic form of photography. With his best known bodies of work, *American Surfaces* and *Uncommon Places*, he set the standard for colour imagery of the social landscape. Moreover, he pioneered two of the most important photographic idioms of the past 40 years: the diaristic snapshot and the monumentalised landscape. It was the artist's skill with pictorial composition, and his delicate handling of colour, light and shadow, which inspired an increased interest in colour photography, eventually leading to the vividly realistic film being accepted as a genuine artistic medium.

During the 1970s, Shore embarked on his first road trip around America, directing his lens towards the huge diversity found within suburban environments. His images recall unexplained communications, residential architecture, familiar drive-by diners, generic motel rooms and interchangeable petrol stations. Inspired by the conceptual artists' ideas of photography as

a tool to make systematic, often instinctive, explorations of locations, he set about assembling a visual diary of his travels in which the individual image only found significance once placed in a series of others. Today, the artist's memories are seen as classic Americana, and a collection of culturally rich snapshots exposing the spirit, pace and tones of the time and place.

Recently, Shore has combined film and digital methods to follow his continued interest in documenting the social landscape. Journeying to Israel, Abu Dhabi and Ukraine to find subjects, he still dictates the same character and locality evident in his American musings through his work. The exhibition at Sprüth Magers organises his works categorically rather than chronologically; by subject matter rather than series. Pieces from the photographer's early collections are removed from their original groupings and placed in this context for the first time, highlighting his visual approach, which has remained largely unchanged over time and setting.

Continually reappearing in Shore's images are individual portraits of relatives, friends and strangers. Often taken while moving, in quick glancing moments, the works maintain an indifferent focus, encompassing the artist's sensory experiences but avoiding layers of narrative and emotion. The portraits are not excessively studied or stylised; instead he overlooks the three-dimensionality of the characters, presenting individuals and cultural signifiers. Also repeatedly covering intersecting roads, architectural details, vehicles and pedestrians in his work, the photographer allows objects to reflect their ordinariness, refusing to clutter the image with constructed narratives and imposed interpretations. www.spruethmagers.com.