

## Receding Form and Waning Light

*This paradoxical experience of a limit without an end, of a finishing line that does not materialize, of being bounded by something that is not there...*<sup>1</sup>

The word 'horizon' is derived from the Greek 'horizōn' meaning 'bounding', which often appears in conjunction with 'kýklos' (cycle, circle). The ancient Greek conception of the horizon was one that encompassed the viewer within the limits of their perception—the viewer's world. Cultural scholar Didier Maleuvre describes how 'a horizon bespeaks its beholder... [it] assumes the presence of a perceiver dwelling *within*, rather than above, the landscape'.<sup>2</sup> Thus our idea of a horizon grows from our own perception—we build our own horizons at the limit of our experience.

This relativity is a common theme in Jessie Green's practice. She draws on the experiments of optics and sensory perception, which are then turned back onto our lived experience; the works question how we can know about our own knowing. Green describes her works as 'coincidences', a term which I repeat here to mean both the collision of otherwise separate ideas, as well as the uncertain and unanticipated nature of this encounter. Her works often push at the limits of perception, where our senses begin to fail us. Optical illusions are employed like a sleight of hand, not spectacular or grandiose, but a subtle turn prompting a double-take and a quiet revolution.

The horizon collapses space—it is a two-dimensional entity which can never be reached, it has no depth, and yet we understand it as a spatial marker. To think of the horizon as both space and line incites ideas of pictorial space. In his writing on painting and colour theory, Josef Albers describes the collision of colour along boundaries:

*[Abutting colours] often appear as a shadow on one side of the boundary and as light reflected on the other side. Or sometimes this vibration presents just a duplication or triplication of the boundary line.*<sup>3</sup>

Albers' description relates to our perception of light at the edges of things. Light performs boundaries in particular ways, warping and scattering at the precipice. Here in *Horizon Lines*, Green plays on this, presenting a fractured and stuttering horizon that imitates distance with diminishing line and light. While light is enlisted differently (describing depth rather than reflection), the stuttering remains in the multiple planes that that both infer and terminate distance.

The horizon, like all boundaries, both excludes and contains. By 'building our own horizons' I do not mean that we master them; indeed, horizons are the points of the world pushing back, reigning in our panoptic potential. They are liminal lines that we cannot inhabit, a liminality not for us, but tied to us. *Horizon Lines* unsettles this notion; it teases at distance, offering us striated boundaries to be overtaken and overcome. It is an illusion of inertia, capriciously propelling us beyond horizons, beyond the contested sites between us and the world. It is a fickle dare to betray ourselves, to surpass our own world-endings. Despite the impossibility of such an act, the brief belief that we might accomplish this offers a transfixing moment of elation through receding form and waning light.

Ash Tower, October 2016

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<sup>1</sup> Didier Maleuvre, *The Horizon: A History of Our Infinite Longing* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1975), 62.