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WATER WORKS: MATTHEW BRANDT'S EXPERIMENTAL LANDSCAPES

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As a student at U.C.L.A., the California photographer Matthew Brandt became fascinated with experimental processes from the dawn of photography. “Daguerreotypes were too dangerous,” he told me, “so I decided to focus on salted-paper printing.” Soon enough, though, Brandt began inventing his processes, and applying them to large-scale studies of the natural world: lakes, honey bees, trees.

When Brandt creates a photograph for his “Lakes and Reservoirs” series, the water itself is part of the process. Out in the field, Brandt takes with him two key tools: a camera, and a five-gallon plastic jug. “The camera is to take an image of the lake or reservoir, while the jugs are to take some of the actual lake,” he explained. When he gets back to his studio, he makes prints of selected images, then empties the water he collected into a large tray. “The c-print of that same lake is then submerged into the tray with the lake’s water,” he said. “From this point I wait for the water to break down its own photographic image. Depending on the image density and water, this breakdown time can take days or weeks.”

Here’s a selection from “Lakes and Reservoirs,” currently on view as part of the larger exhibition “Lakes, Trees and Honeybees” at Yossi Milo gallery.