

# M+B

## photograph

Matthew Porter: Greet the Dust  
M+B Gallery, Los Angeles



The girl in Matthew Porter's photograph Base Camp has a whimsical, far-off look, like one of the girls in Sophia Coppola's early films – *Virgin Suicides* or *Lost in Translation*. She's broody and inaccessible but also really normal-looking: the girl next door who has a deep interior life or who just looks especially pretty when zoning out. She's wearing jeans and a flannel button-down shirt, has her sandy blond hair pulled back and sits inside of a mandarin-colored tent made of fabric too ethereal to belong to anything you'd find at REI. It's more the kind of tent you might make as a kid out of your mother's discarded sheer curtains. She has a black and silver microscope between her legs and a white metal bar from a loopy fence is superimposed over the print's right side, an unfinished decorative border.

Base Camp hangs in the small back room of Matthew Porter's *Greet the Dust*, up at M+B in West Hollywood through December 7, and seeing it might make you go back and look at the whole show again.

Porter, whose last show at M+B featured images of plants superimposed on midcentury architecture, crisp images of Jane Fonda or images of women posing as Fonda, and

landscapes too perfect to be totally believed, is a smooth operator. Like Elad Lassry, Roe Ethridge or Sarah VanDerBeek, all born in the same decade, he makes you feel nostalgic for a just-past era of print advertising when the colors and saturation of photographs felt slightly more tangible, when the adman's arguments for materialism felt slightly more material.

Porter calls his exhibition *Greet the Dust* after a statement by King Gustav V of Sweden when remains of explorers were returned to the Swedes 30 years after they had failed to reach the North Pole and crashed their balloon over a Norwegian island. The remains of a dead fantasy brought back into the public eye. Most every image involves multiple exposures, all done using analogue processes. In *This is Tomorrow*, patterns and color blocks, the photo of a coconut and a kitchen table all come together to make a colorful, mod montage. In *Plastic Form*, a tan plastic form floats above a red Corinthian column, two tables and a pair of purple clippers. It's all competently, seductively produced, yet suggests a perplexing fantasy.

What happens most clearly in Base Camp happens to some degree in all Porter's prints: his highly stylized, seemingly benign images make his subjects more appealing and more inscrutable than they otherwise would be. They seduce you like a pretty, moody shot in a TV show like *Mad Men*, only in the context of a gallery and with no narrative to distract, you're more aware of being seduced.

-- By Catherine Wagley 10/05/2013