

M+B



Arts previews: The Columbus Museum of Art hosts the first solo exhibition of L.A. photographer-on-the-rise.

By Jackie Mantey

From the November 14, 2013 edition



Like most good things, photographer Matthew Brandt's artistic claim to fame began with bodily fluids.

While working on a portraiture project in grad school at UCLA, Brandt started developing his images using the subject's vomit, snot, spit, et al.

"Every bodily fluid except for, like, spinal fluid," said Brandt via phone from L.A. "The fluid reflected them in one way or another. It was an interesting play between subject and material... [This technique] was a way to get closer to them. I know that's a cheesy way to think of those photos but I can't help it. It was like a collaboration with the subject. It also became a study of what fluids worked well on a basic technical photographic level."

Those investigations have become the cornerstone for Brandt's work. The artist uses elements from the subjects he photographs in the process of developing their images — emulsified bee carcasses for a gum bichromate series of photos of dead bees, killed from colony collapse and collected from their sandy beachside grave; lake water for landscape portraits; Bubblicious Grape for photos of a waterfall; dust for an atrophying building; and (for work he's currently making) hair dye, bubble wrap, velvet and cocaine for images of iconic Hollywood attractions.

"I'm always learning from the materials, always trying to be observant," said Brandt, who has a collection of curiosities in his studio of things he has collected to perhaps inspire a later project; a jar of dead skin flakes, for example.

M+B



The interesting, innovative approach to old photographic processes and the art that results from Brandt's patient hand (some images sit for months as they develop) has garnered the 31-year-old a lot of attention. The magazine *Hollywood Reporter* recently tapped Brandt as one of California's top 10 artists to watch, and the Columbus Museum of Art is hosting Brandt's first solo museum exhibition. The exhibit includes pieces from his "Honeybees," "Lakes and Reservoirs," "Taste Tests and Colors," and "Dust" series.

"I've been making things for a long time but this is the first time it's got to this level of acknowledgement," said Brandt, admittedly a little befuddled with his art's new high demand. "It seems like a little more is at stake. I feel a little more responsibility. ... The ultimate thing is to not compromise the art at the end of the day."