

# M+B

## The Columbus Dispatch

### **Columbus Museum of Art: Exposed to new concepts** Bold manipulation of photographs adds tactile quality

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Mary's Lake, MT 7

Every now and then, an artist comes along who challenges tradition.

Every notion about how something “has been done” is thrown out, and a new way of image-making reflects a fresh, young generation.

Matthew Brandt, labeled by Forbes as one of the “Top 30 Under 30 in Art and Design,” is one such catalyst for change.

The Columbus Museum of Art is hosting the Los Angeles artist's first solo museum exhibition.

As demonstrated by the 18 works on view, Brandt loosely defines the term photography and creates works all about manipulation.

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Many of the pieces contain three clear parts: a photograph of a landscape containing a body of water or a cityscape, an unexpected material that encroaches on the photo's surface and a yielding of the image to the material. The result is a dance between the control and precision of the photo and the element of chance introduced by the unexpected substance.

And I do mean unexpected.

On the list of materials: lake water, bubble gum, gelatin, gummy bears, honeybees and dust.

The exhibit opens with a series of several landscapes featuring specific lakes. Each photo has been soaked in the water of the lake for a few days or up to a few months. The resulting image is less about the photo and more about the process.

In step with the scale consistent throughout the exhibit, Mary's Lake, MT 7 is large. Pools of blue created by soaking the photo in lake water are impossible to tell from the blue of the lake pictured. The overall distress of the photo is underscored by the chromatic

explosion recorded on the surface.

The technique, perhaps Brandt's reaction to the history of landscape painting and photography, is ingenious.

Then there are the buildings. These photos are processed with the dust of the demolition or renovation of each particular building. The "Superior Court" series chronicles a day in 2008 when one building was photographed from the four cardinal directions. Dust from the building's renovation is used to process the photo, giving the image a ghostly character.

Mather's Department Store taps into the documentary nature of photography. Brandt snapped an image of the building at its demolition, then applied dust from the ruins to the image.

The "Taste Tests in Color" series uses the same photo three times, appropriating the Vernal Falls vantage point that Ansel Adams used in a photo of Yosemite National Park. Brandt coats the photographed, then silk-screened image with a candy-store aisle's worth of sugar and psychedelic colors.

All of his works — especially the landscapes — prompt one to ask: Since when did photography become so tactile? Since now.

Brandt's exhibit reads less like a question and more like a statement.

This is contemporary photography.