

# M+B

## photograph

### MATTHEW PORTER: FOUR FALSE STARTS AT M+B

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Matthew Porter, *Vorticist Studio*, 2015. Courtesy M+B



Matthew Porter, *Dynamic of the Dark*, 2015. Courtesy M+B

The custom-made, dazzle camo jumpsuit that appears in multiple photographs in Matthew Porter's current exhibition at M+B through March 12 is attractive enough to illicit envy. If a viewer is, like this writer, a jumpsuit collector, she might repeatedly think, "how can I get one of those?" when encountering Porter's model in that quirky black-and-white ensemble, standing on a chair or between the shadows of palm branches in a carefully framed photo. Much of the work in Porter's show *Four False Starts* invites such personal reactions – it's easy to simply "like" or "want" one of the photographs, and not worry too much about its worth in relation to the cannon or the current moment.

Porter titled his show after a *New Yorker* essay by Janet Malcolm, "Forty-One False Starts," in which Malcolm considers the career of painter David Salle, trying again and again to effectively "start" the article. In many of her starts, she thinks about expectations, how "the specter of wrongdoing hovers more luridly over visual art than over literature or music." There is more pressure to be at once humble and wildly original, committed but not overtly ambitious.

In his show, Porter includes four different "starts" to bodies of work. There are the girl-in-jumpsuit photos; the close-ups of tools taken in his sculptor father's Maine studio; documentary-style photographs taken in the Polich Talix fabrication studio, which has made work for Alexander Calder and Louise Bourgeois; and semi-abstract, multi-colored still lifes made using multiple exposures. The latter most resembles work from Porter's past shows, stylized explorations of color and control that felt more self-conscious about their cohesiveness and relevance as "contemporary art exhibitions."

Here, hanging so close to an elegant photo of factory tools, a multiply exposed montage of a saturated table and lamp surrounded by leaves looks like just one inconclusive possibility for image-making. There are other possibilities too. Overall, Porter's show, funnily, feels like the effort of a mid-career artist to be free of the pressure to be a single, pitchable thing. This sense of newfound freedom releases the viewer, too, to let the mind wander and to think about attraction or nostalgia rather than success.