

THE EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

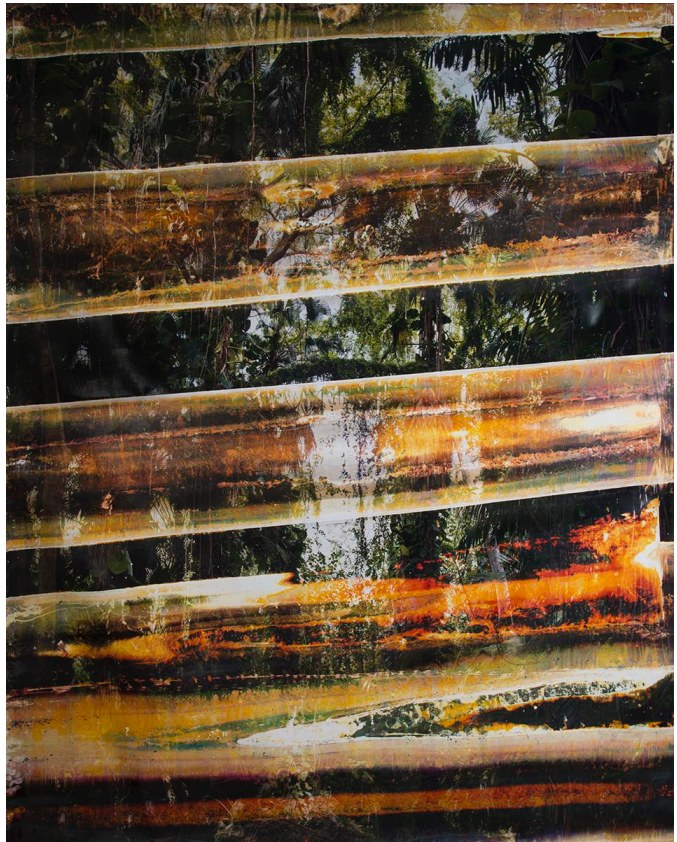
Forest Lawn Museum : Light & Matter : The Art of Matthew Brandt

L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

APRIL 27, 2022

Light & Matter: The Art of Matthew Brandt is a retrospective exhibition featuring more than 100 photographs and multi-media artworks, some of which have never before been exhibited. Curated by Colin Westerbeck, *Light & Matter* examines how Matthew Brandt continually reinvents and reimagines photography itself. Large-scale portraits rendered in molten metal, photographs transformed by being processed with samples of the subject matter they represent, and images printed in edible materials are among the more than 20 distinct bodies of work in the exhibition.

Brandt's artistic approach is rooted in tradition, but his work is both visually and conceptually innovative. He often utilizes early photographic processes and techniques, including some that date to the 19th century. For his "Eagles" series (2017-2019), featured prominently in the exhibition, Brandt created new daguerreotypes of American bald eagles from melted U.S. Silver Dollar Eagle coins and glass. In his "La Brea" series (2013-2014), Brandt turned to heliography, which is a process developed nearly 200 years ago by pioneering photographer, Nicéphore Niépce. Using tar from the La Brea Tar Pits, Brandt created large, sun-cured images of fossils that appear both prehistoric and painterly.



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The artist unites subject and image through the careful manipulation of process and materials. In his “Waterfalls” series (2013-2016), he took photos of waterfalls, collected water from the rivers, then pumped a continuous stream over each image as it was being developed. In doing so, the photographs were distorted, yet the impression of a literal waterfall formed on each image. The end result is a kaleidoscope of color that appears to flow across the multi-layered photographs.

Brandt again fused image and subject in a new work that was created during the planning of *Light & Matter*. He photographed Forests Lawn’s 17-foot-tall replica of Michelangelo’s David after it fell over in March 2020. While the majority of the fragments were donated to artists and an arts organization, Brandt received a small, amorphous piece of the statue. After further breaking down this fragment, Brandt printed his photograph of David in marble dust. James Fishburne, Ph.D., Director of Forest Lawn Museum said, “It’s great to see Matthew give new life to this artwork. The image crosses boundaries between sculpture and photography in ways that I never imagined were possible.”

For his “Authors” series (2019-2020), Brandt re-created photos of famous writers using metal made from molten type. The images were applied to paper, while the metal was the same alloy used in traditional printing presses. By portraying writers in the materials used to produce their books, Brandt’s work honors the authors and connects them to the source of their artistic output. The unique materials create slightly abstracted likenesses, which have a distinctly tactile quality due to the three-dimensional nature of the metal.

Some of Brandt’s work demonstrates his ability to harness the forces of nature. For his “Wai’anae” series (2015-2016), he took photos of the lush Hawaiian landscape. Brandt then wrapped the chromogenic prints in banana leaves, lace, burlap, and buried them in the volcanic soil of the Wai’anae area of Oahu, thereby allowing moisture and dirt to transform his images. After being unearthed, they resemble abstract paintings, with trees and tropical plants obscured by the elements of the island. The impressive scale of the images gives viewers a sense that they are directly encountering nature. At nine feet, Wai’anae 108501 imparts a monumental presence not found in traditional landscape photography.

Exhibition curator, Colin Westerbeck, is the former Director of the California Museum of Photography (2008-2012) and former Curator of Photography at the Art Institute of Chicago (1986-2003). He stated, “Matthew’s work is in dialogue with the history of photography. He mines the past in order to create something completely new.” While teaching a graduate seminar at UCLA, Westerbeck first encountered Brandt as one of his students. “The originality of Matthew’s vision has only grown with each new subject to which he has turned his attention. His imagination is truly boundless!” Spanning the last 17 years, *Light & Matter: The Art of Matthew Brandt* showcases a broad range of work, including photographs from the early years of his career, to new artwork that is on view for the first time.

Light & Matter: The Art of Matthew Brandt

April 21, 2022-September 4, 2022

Forest Lawn Museum

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