

At a time when the photographic production of images feels more taken for granted and public than ever, Josh Brand's peculiarly private way of creating and thinking about photographs is refreshing. Indeed, where most contemporary images seek to communicate or generate some form of desire or envy (for oneself, the good life, things, etc), Brand's images all but withdraw into themselves, insisting on their own making, mystery, and hieroglyphic privacy. It's as if his photographic images reserved the right to eschew their primary function –representation– in favour of evocation and that contemporary bugbear, autonomy: the relative autonomy of procedure, chance, and finally what the image itself wants.

Dignifying the desires of his medium, Brand's method is not about pointing and shooting, but rather about a process that takes place almost entirely in the darkroom and includes everything from the photogram, film, photocopy, collage and other techniques and materials. Enigmatic motifs, or “characters” as Brand calls them, such as the folding room, the broken room, the Horus eye figure, red seed, plant, Horus eye scale, among others, are subjected to a series of procedures in which they both appear and become all but unrecognisable. In this way, these new works draw upon and synthesise Brand's three previous exhibitions at Herald St while looking back to the sometimes esoteric origins of photography and its relationship to film, constructivism, and image making. The photos collected here can almost be seen as instances of animation, punctuated by large gaps, conceivably projected by a magic lantern or a camera obscura. As such, Brand's photographs bring to mind the materially complex origins of photography as well as the potentially evocative nature of images themselves, as an ideal.

By Chris Sharp

Josh Brand (b. 1980, Elkhorn) lives and works in Brooklyn.

Selected solo and group shows include: *What Wind*, Ceysson & Bénétière, New York (2019); Alexandra Bircken, Josh Brand, Matthew Darbyshire, Michael Dean, Cary Kwok, Amalia Pica, Nicole Wermers, Herald St | Museum St, London (2018); Adrian Rosenfeld, San Francisco (2018); *Double Take*, Drawing Room, London (2016); *Peace Being*, Herald St, London (2015); *Never Enough: Recent Acquisitions of Contemporary Art*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas (2014); *Personal Space*, Essex Flowers, New York (2014); Misako and Rosen, Tokyo (2014 and 2011); *Nature*, Herald St, London (2012); *Update*, White Columns, New York (2011); Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2010); Grange Prize for Contemporary Photography, AGO – Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2010); Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago (2010); *La Preuve Concrete*, curated by Bettina Klein, CEAAC, Strasbourg, FR (2009) and *The Possible*

*Document*, Herald St, London (2008); *White Columns (Project)*, New York (2007). Brand's work is further held in the collections of Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Dallas Museum of Art.

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