

MATTHEW BRANDT

From the Ashes

Exhibition Dates: November 8, 2025 - January 10, 2026

Opening Reception: Saturday, November 8, 5:00PM - 7:00PM



Matthew Brandt, *Panama Pacific International Fair_AAE-02831*, 2025
Gum bichromate print on paper with dust swept from residential stairwell, 34.5 x 43.5 inches

Haines Gallery is pleased to present ***From the Ashes***, the gallery's first solo exhibition with Los Angeles-based experimental photographer **Matthew Brandt** (b. 1982), known for his inventive, materially driven processes that merge subject and substance. *From the Ashes* brings together five interrelated bodies of work, including *Dust*, *January Skies*, *Florida Strangler*, *Eagles*, and *Wai'anae*—each defined by the artist's characteristic fusion of conceptual rigor and material experimentation. Taken together, these series explore how photography's physical and chemical foundations can mirror the social, environmental, and political realities of the world they depict.

Drawing on the medium's early, alchemical beginnings, Brandt frequently develops his photographs using materials gathered from the places they represent, such as lake water and dirt. "Most of what I do," Brandt explains, "stems from the relationship between the photographic subject and its representational material. Each methodology has its own baggage to carry, and that baggage becomes part of the work's meaning." Through this approach, Brandt extends photography's indexical function—its capacity to be *of* something as much as *about* it—transforming images into tangible traces of what they depict.

From the Ashes debuts a suite of new images that takes San Francisco as its focus, created specifically for this exhibition. A continuation of Brandt's 2013 *Dust* series, these newly realized works reanimate archival images of buildings that once stood near Haines' Fort Mason location. Using pigment made from dust collected at the present-day sites of demolished structures—



Matthew Brandt, *January Sky XXXVI*, 2025
Pigment and plaster on cement board, 5.5 x 13.5 inches

among them the grand but temporary palaces of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition and the former immigration and detention buildings on Angel Island—he creates large-scale gum-bichromate prints that collapse time and material. These images, at once luminous and decaying, ask viewers to consider San Francisco’s complicated history of progress and erasure, aspiration and exclusion.

In *January Skies* (2025), Brandt pays homage to his hometown with a series that captures the city’s smoke-tinged skies during the wildfires that devastated parts of Los Angeles in January 2025. Pigments from inkjet prints are transferred onto wet plaster applied to cement panels, the surfaces cracking and fissuring as they dry. The resulting fresco-like images—fragments suspended between solidity and dissolution—evoke both the physical vulnerability of the landscape and the enduring beauty found within catastrophe.

Also on view for the first time, the works from *Florida Strangler* (2022–23), drawn from Brandt’s ongoing *Carbon* series, depict the native *figus aurea*—trees that begin life high in another tree’s canopy and grow downward, ultimately enveloping and “strangling” the host with their roots. While their name draws sinister connotations, strangler figs are also considered a vital species in the tropical ecosystem. Using a process akin to carbon printing, Brandt renders these tangled forms with automotive paint on Kevlar, Tyvek, and Teflon-treated canvases—industrial synthetics manufactured by DuPont, the same corporation long associated with “forever chemicals” used in everything from vehicles to building materials and athletic clothing. The pairing of ecological imagery and petrochemicals underscores the entanglement of nature and industry, parasitism and survival.

Brandt’s *Eagles* (2017–19) comprises a grid of fifty daguerreotypes of bald eagles fighting over salmon, photographed during Alaska’s annual Bald Eagle Festival. Initially undertaken as a foray into wildlife photography, the project evolved into a pointed reflection on American symbolism. Each image is made on a silver plate cast from melted-down American Silver Eagle coins, merging subject and medium in a potent metaphor for competition, consumption, and the circulation of power. “All I was witnessing,” Brandt recalls, “was eagles stealing from each other—a constant battle for salmon.” Completed more than five years ago, the series feels no less relevant to our current political landscape.

In his series *Wai’anae* (2015), named for the Oahu town in which the works were made, photographs of the Hawaiian landscape bear physical markings from the land itself. Chromogenic prints of Oahu’s dense forests were rolled in dirt, leaves, burlap, and lace, and buried in the local terrain. Over time, earth and the elements altered the works, eroding the pictures’ surfaces in some areas and superimposing new patterns onto others. Inviting nature’s unpredictable intervention, the series speaks to cycles of erosion and renewal—echoing the Hawaiian funerary custom in which the body is enshrouded and returned to the ground, becoming part of nature again.

Together, the works in *From the Ashes* trace Brandt's sustained inquiry into the mutable boundaries between image and matter, culture and environment, creation and entropy. From the detritus of demolished architecture to the particulate haze of wildfire skies, from the corrosion of buried prints to the gleam of silver recast, Brandt's practice insists that every photograph is a material event—a collision of time, place, and chemistry.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Using unexpected materials to develop his photographs—from lake water and rocks to gummy bears—**Matthew Brandt** (b. 1982, lives and works in Los Angeles, CA) experiments with labor-intensive processes that unite subject and medium while addressing social and environmental concerns. Brandt received his BFA from Cooper Union, New York and his MFA from UCLA. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Forest Lawn Museum, Glendale, CA; Newark Museum of Art, NJ; Columbus Museum of Art, OH; Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, Virginia Beach, VA; and SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA. Group exhibitions include the recent traveling exhibition *Second Nature: Photography in the Age of the Anthropocene*, as well as *Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography*, Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; *What Is a Photograph?*, International Center of Photography, New York, NY; *New Territory*, Denver Art Museum, CO; and *Land Marks*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. Brandt is a 2024 Guggenheim Fellow and a former Prix Pictet finalist. His works reside in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Getty Museum, Guggenheim Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, National Gallery of Art, and others worldwide.



Matthew Brandt, *Florida Strangler 2K1*, 2022-2023
Carbon print, Dupont paint on Kevlar,
66 x 45 x 1.5 inches

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