

Photos of Gifts by Heather Bennett
BRUNO DAVID GALLERY
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Opening Reception, October 14, 6-8 pm



Somebody with a Little Hammer for JLM, 2017

Photos of Gifts

Photographic images have traditionally depicted space, revealing people and objects, they are the stuff of illusion. They are also things. At the intersection of these identities is a kind of gooey vacillation as we look at and through a photographic image in contemporary culture. This work seems to depict exactly what the series title, *Photos of Gifts*, describes, however, objects are often wrapped with photographic images complicating illusionistic space, as well as, obscuring object identities. Photographs as objects become part of the image construction, acting as things and simultaneously describing them. A seemingly fictitious space is created that belies and pronounces the archaic assumptive truth telling aspect of the photograph. Depth and flatness become one tactic, breaking in upon one another promiscuously. These images don't so much capture a past but hint at a transition. They are portraits of an object in a transient state, a brief state as the gift object, pampered and prepared, veiled and decorated, ready to be torn open and revealed. The ephemerality of the gift object, and of the photographic moment, in general, are collapsed and conflated with a wink.

This arguably absolute objecthood of the photograph is compounded in these works with the history of the woman as object so intricately outlined by her representation in the photographic/ film medium. Women acting as objects for magazine advertisements are subtly transformed here to the focused subjects. Flattened, inextricable from the object portrait, their images are wrapped around that object and tied with a bow. The subject/ object reversal of the female form gets a sea sickening treatment. The small act of wrapping a gift becomes a potent metaphor, exploding within its supposedly quiet, often assumed to be feminine place.

Barthes' 'that has been' moment which can never be again is treated with intention and without regret, without loss. The presence of the present implies duration which is essential to, and of course, contradictory to, ephemerality. Loss is horse-traded for simultaneity and contradiction leaving us to wonder not only what has been but if it ever was at all.

Heather Bennett

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Digital Photograph on Platine Rag, 44" x 65", Edition of 3