

# MODERN PAINTERS

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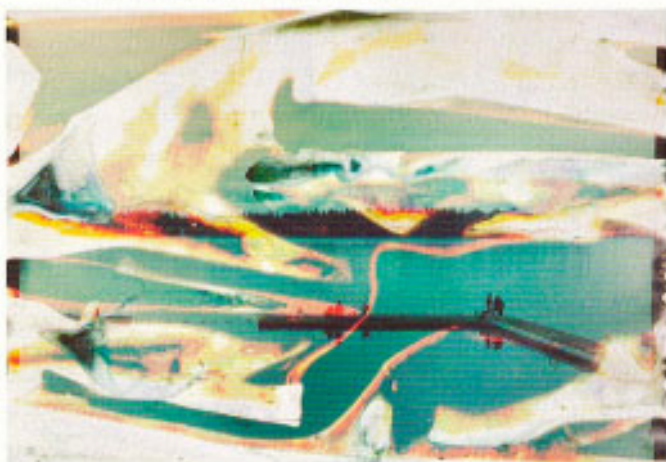
## REVIEWS

### LOS ANGELES

#### Matthew Brandt

M+B // September 16–October 29

POWER DELIVERED FROM fossil fuel or hydroelectric dams travels along high-tension lines from Nevada or farther away to Beverly Hills and into the wiring of M+B gallery, through a transformer mounted on the wall, through five etchings on copper by Matthew Brandt, and at last illuminates a vintage Edison lightbulb (circa late 1890s) dangling from the ceiling below a skylight and between the pair of photographs from which this exhibition takes its deceptively self-explanatory name, "Two Ships Passing." It is important that this current comes from somewhere. The materials used in these artworks have sources and destinations. The show represents U.S.-China relations not in terms of maintenance or stability but as a system in transition, with a history of industrialization and a future in flux.



On its path to the bulb, the electrical current bypasses three C-prints of a solitary man on a dock: *American Lake WA B3, ... D4, and ... D5*, all from 2011, as are the rest of the works in the show. The photographs were dunked in American Lake, near Tacoma, Washington, and are presumably images of that lake. Their emulsion has bled and faded into yellow, cyan, and magenta washes. Their material stability has been disrupted through immersion; the lake water eroded the image. Elsewhere, water combines with salt to produce images, as in *Two Ships Passing, China* and *Two Ships Passing, U.S.* These soft brown photos were printed using salted paper and water from the aqueous bodies they depict: the Xianjiang River and the Pacific Ocean, respectively. Brandt links the two countries symbolically: through salt, one of the oldest currencies, and water, which provides the route for globalized maritime trade.

For some viewers, this watery interconnectedness might become obvious and inconsequential. But the pieces in the exhibition make an emotional and metaphorical statement about U.S.-China relations that couldn't be made otherwise. They are very romantic. The copper etchings that conduct the current depict modern urban China. These images are slick, technological, and electrified, while the *American Lake* photos are landlocked, degenerating in isolation, off the grid. The energy of innovation moves past the U.S. and through China into a kind of hyperactive, bulky, steampunk economy. The etchings, like an Edison bulb or a vacuum-tube computer, possess the romance of industrial relics. Brandt's faded photos of lonely docks and tiny ships are wistful and full of longing. "Two ships passing" is a euphemism for doomed lovers. Here what really defines the relationship between the U.S. and China is the ships that pass between them, never meeting, going different places, carrying different cargos. Two lovers, two countries, two economies, two industrializations, two machines of trade: two ships full of people going two directions.

—Travis Diehl



# ART



Matthew Brandt  
*American Lake* (C-prints)  
WA, EJ, 2011  
C-prints coated  
in 100% wool fat  
48 x 64 in.



# ATCH

MATTHEW COLLINGS  
HUMA BHABHA  
LAURE PROUVOST  
MARK HANDFORTH  
STINA LEI RODRIGUEZ  
DANA SCHUTZ  
GLENN KAINO

