

ARTFORUM

Lucas Blalock

RAMIKEN CRUCIBLE

389 Grand Street

November 6 – December, 2011



JKF NNN, 2011, color photograph, 32 1/4 x 40 1/2"

Our image culture could be called a collective fantasy, a dream dreamed up for us by those with plans to oil the gears of our desires, and the designers working at Adobe have succeeded in helping make our reverie clean, smooth, and numinous, almost imperceptibly. Photoshop is, after all, an editing program that is most often deployed in advertising as a means of making things disappear by seamlessly integrating them into our ways of seeing and perceiving. As a result, when the mechanics of this often invisible technology are dredged unceremoniously to the surface and paraded around, as they are in the lion's share of the awkwardly beguiling photographs that make up Lucas Blalock's exhibition "xyz," you get the discomfiting feeling that something has gone wrong.

Here, a stone chimney sprouts bulbous, mutant growths (*Double Chimney*, all works 2011), and a monumental triptych proffers three psychedelic permutations of a car tire that seems as if it has been stretched and shredded by a Cubist, one straining to provide us with all possible views at once (*Tire*, *Tire II*, *Tire III*). But as odd as these images are, they are made still stranger by the fact that they possess none of the disingenuous magic of true Photoshop wizardry. Anyone with an even rudimentary knowledge of the software can see these manipulations are bald-faced—Blalock makes no attempt to cover his tracks. Shouldn't these, you are provoked to wonder, be better done? But, of course, adroitness is not the point. Like all things that appear slightly "off," Blalock's digital tinkering—and, for that matter, his equally odd, jerry-rigged still lifes, such as *Pink Moon* and *JKF NNN*, which have the appearance of product shots for ad campaigns too weird to make it past committee—enjoin us to reflect on the machinery and the mores of that which we consider the norm. In this way, his images represent a novel step in the history of photographic self-reflexivity: They are playful, surreal pratfalls, which alchemize failure into success.

-Chris Wiley