

WHITNEY

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Press Release

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WHITNEY AT ALTRIA TO PRESENT MATTHEW BRANNON: WHERE WERE WE March 29, 2007–August 2007



Matthew Brannon, *Steak Dinner*, 2007, L
Letterpress on paper, 24 x 18 (61 x 45.7) unframed
Collection of the artist; courtesy Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York

Matthew Brannon employs a signature combination of printed materials, design strategies, and text to create work inscribed with psychological content and critique. In various modes of production including letterpress, silk-screen, lithography and other printed matter, Brannon constructs an indeterminate graphic identity that veils a pointed sensibility. For his first solo museum exhibition, Brannon expands his balance of text and image in a commissioned installation for the Whitney at Altria's Gallery and Sculpture Court that underscores the complex relationship between art, career ambition, power, and taste. Matthew Brannon: *Where Were We* is curated by Howie Chen, branch manager at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Drawing on the graphic iconography of corporate, commuter, and after-hour cosmopolitan lifestyles, *Where Were We* presents letter-pressed and silk-screened imagery ranging from men's toiletries to sushi dinners arranged as framed prints on a series of custom display structures designed by Brannon. The pairing of image and narrative text within each print work to subvert singular interpretations, bringing the viewer

into an associative play of language and representation. What appears as a simple assortment of office stationery and commuter accoutrement becomes a loaded composition detailing career dysfunction, status anxiety, and private transgressions. The spatial layout of the installation and the accrual of narratives from the works overall form a literary framework and viewing experience akin to reading a screenplay that is at once anonymous and interchangeably personal.

Also part of the exhibition is a large-scale commission work in the public windows of the Sculpture Court featuring a stark 30ft. black silhouette of a coiled eel. As a reoccurring motif in Brannon's work, the eel acts as a changing symbol and conflicted logo for abjectness, refinement, and wealth despite its simple and alluring graphical presence. Viewable from both outside Grand Central Terminal and inside the Whitney at Altria, the eel takes on the promotional proportion of commercial street signage in the context of Midtown and Time Square area. With *Where Were We*, Brannon creates an expanded dialogue with the works, display structures, and the context of bustling midtown atmosphere.

Born in 1971 in St. Marie's, Idaho, Matthew Brannon received his B.A from the University of California, Los Angeles and his M.F.A from Columbia University. Brannon lives and works in New York and has exhibited his work in solo exhibitions including at Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada; Art 37 Basel Statements, David Kordansky Gallery, Basel, Switzerland; Friedrich Pretzel Gallery, NY, NY; and Jan Winkelmann, Berlin, Germany. His work has also been featured in group exhibitions at venues such as The Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Hudson Valley, NY; United Artists. Ltd., Marfa; Galerie Edward Mitterrand, Geneva, Switzerland; Art Forum, Berlin, Germany; White Columns, NY, NY; and P.S.1 MoMA, NY, NY.

Matthew Brannon: *Where Were We* is accompanied by a free brochure with an essay by curator Howie Chen. Free gallery talks are offered every Wednesday and Friday at 1:00 p.m.

The Whitney Museum at Altria is funded by Altria Group, Inc.

The Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria is located at 120 Park Avenue at 42nd Street. Gallery hours: Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Sculpture Court Hours: Monday through Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Sundays and holidays 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Whitney Museum at Altria is funded by Altria Group, Inc. Admission is free. Free gallery talks are offered every Wednesday and Friday at 1:00 p.m. For further information, please call (917) 663-2453.