

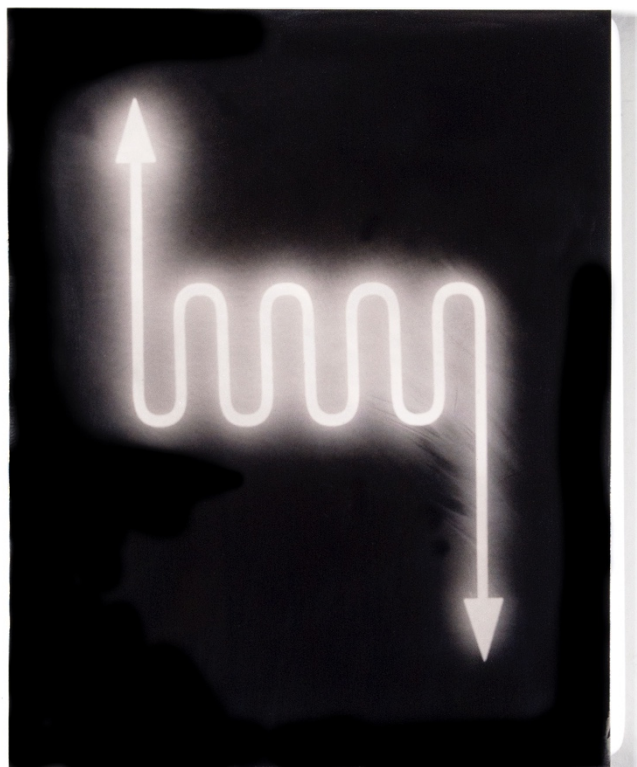
# REYNOLDS GALLERY

**BRITTANY NELSON**

*Conjectures in a Related Field*

March 3 – April 14, 2017

Opening Reception  
Friday, March 3  
7 – 9 pm



Conductor #1, 2017, tintype photograph on powder coated formed aluminum, 5 x 4 x 2 inches.

Reynolds Gallery is pleased to present *Conjectures in a Related Field*, an exhibition of recent tintype photographs by Brittany Nelson. *Conjectures in a Related Field* conveys a general critique of photographic methods through specific process experimentation. The show opens with a reception for the artist on Friday, March 3 from 7 – 9 pm and continues through April 14, 2017.

Unabashed and almost irreverent, Brittany Nelson reinvents historical photographic processes and challenges photography's materials and chemistry with a modern perspective. Originating from the darkroom, where unique solutions violently react in a time- and habitat-sensitive process, her resulting tintypes extend the multisensory labor of making and viewing photography. Previously, Nelson explored a 19<sup>th</sup> century technique called Mordançage, yet in *Conjectures in a Related Field*, she revives tintype emulsions, which originated in the 1860s as portable photographs known for their speedy develop time. Her approach to the tintypes requires destruction as a means of clean abstraction. After soaking, exposing, and developing the thin metal plates in mercury or hydrogen peroxide, she directly applies Photoshop-produced imagery. Her images take the form of zigzag arrows and clean circles, alluding to solar systems and science book diagrams. The resulting works exist as alien artifacts, ironically transporting us to the future while grounded in archaic processes.

Although chemically derived, Nelson's compositions represent organic metamorphoses. Growing up in rural Montana, she was shaped by its unkempt terrain. She was struck by its bizarre, superficial appearance not unlike that of the planets and deep seas. These landscapes are reflected in her molten-like creations—sleek and otherworldly. Mysterious blackness coagulates within each piece, imposing and contemplative. This compelling quality of texture and surface is amplified as Nelson experiments with size and dimensionality. This series of tintypes ranges from 5 x 5 inches to a daring 30 x 40 inches. As tintypes are usually formatted no greater than 8 x 10 inches, her large-scale works bear an uncontested rarity. By pushing size, Nelson illuminates the metal surface, presenting chemical material as initiator, reactor, and result of her work. Flowing metals appear frozen in time, situated on iron sheets—contained,

yet not far from the darkroom's reckless reactions. Processes of veiling, oxidation, and bleaching emerge disembodied from blackness.

Propped on irregular, wedge-like forms, the photographs gain a dimensionality also attributing to surface exaggeration. While mounted, they confront the viewer as objects, extending into the space a snapshot of their process. Emerging from their pitch-black surface is contradicting warmth. Light emanates from Photoshop-produced orbs, searing through an inky backdrop. Any hint of sepia tones is refracted as each photograph tilts at a varied angle, establishing a sense of movement from piece to piece. They engage in a visual choreography, seemingly floating from the wall as they edge further from their origins, crossing into a fantastical, celestial world.

Brittany Nelson was born in Great Falls, Montana (1984) and currently lives in Richmond, VA teaching photography at VCUarts. She earned her MFA in Photography at Cranbrook Academy of Art (2011) after receiving her BA at Montana State University (2007). She has mounted several major solo and group exhibitions, including those at David Klein Gallery, Detroit, MI; PATRON Gallery, Chicago, IL; Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, NY; Greenwood Museum of Art, Greenwood, SC; Candella Gallery and 1708 Gallery, Richmond, VA. Among many other accolades, Nelson was awarded the Fish/Pearce Award for Excellence in Process Based Work from the Print Center (Philadelphia, PA, 2012), a Theo Westenberger Foundation Grant (2015), and a Creative Capital Grant (2015). She is the founder of Flatten Image, a Richmond-based fine art printing studio specialized in imaging, restoration, and high-quality reproductions. Her work is held in private and public collections including the Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI; Nasher Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC; and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, among others.

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