

A Grocer's Orgy // Lucas Blalock

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March 19, 2019

PHROOM

A GROCER'S ORGY



Lucas Blalock

Lucas Blalock's work is uncomfortable. As an artist he is somewhere between photographer and sculptor, or maybe also collagist and painter. He draws with Photoshop, or cuts and clones—using the “dumb tools” in “blunt ways,” as he says. This, too, is uncomfortable. Typically, when the seams of Photoshop show we consider the work unsuccessful, but Blalock's work is not just visible, it's intentional. This work's

likeness to internet aesthetic is clear even if its relationship to it is not. I would argue that he's gone past showing the labor and now is just making something new.



The photographs that Blalock largely works from have the deadened feel and color palette of late 20th-century commercial photography. Images are placed on other images, collaged, erased through in line drawings, images repeated with chunks taken out of them revealing another of the same image, a little askew, right underneath—or maybe another image altogether—yet maybe not totally different from the one on top. Cloned kiwi fuzz becomes a strange mass of fur and lumps. Mundane objects stand in for other objects. Things look like other things, our pareidolic tendencies encouraged by shading and the occasional line drawing. We see where insides of the pockets are.

The images are always related, and often that relationship can feel a bit cringey. It's easy to lose track of what you're looking at. Fingers and hotdogs, manufactured yet visceral.

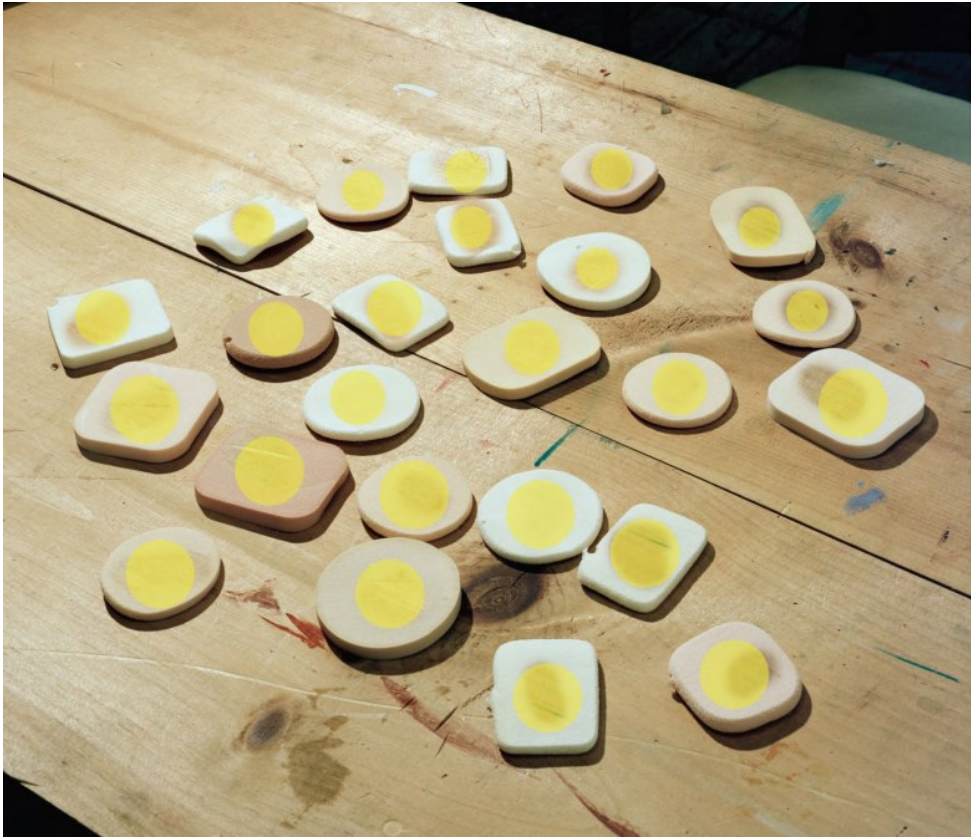


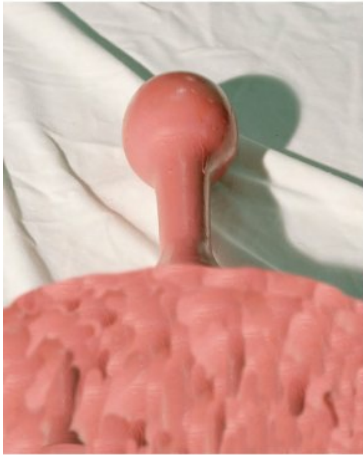
A Grocer's Orgy is a glut of images and iterations. Photographs from the entirety of Blalock career are brought together, some of which will be familiar though none exactly as you've seen them before. These are new versions, or different versions, at least. They overlap and find new associative page partners. The infinite shuffle of possibility. Sometimes these images and their relationships feel deceptively obvious, sometimes very opaque, like a joke that you don't quite get. I think we often don't know what to do with humor in artwork. Seriousness is easier.

Showing the labor somehow also increases the unreliability of these photographs, and it becomes difficult to distinguish straight images. Suddenly you are in the reverse situation of looking and looking because an image seems odd but not obviously so. I honestly can't tell if the photograph of the partially deflated mylar Smurf balloon floating in a supermarket has been altered, though it makes me uncomfortable for the same reasons as if it had. I find myself forced to balance what I'm actually seeing with what something looks like. But I'm naturally prone to overthinking.



There's no text in *A Grocer's Orgy*. It takes the form of a perfect bound book with well-printed pages and the feeling of a high-end magazine, delivering just the right impression of distributed iteration. This is perhaps not the most desirable way to describe an art book. I assume that many would prioritize the rarified object, but *A Grocer's Orgy* throws into relief a lot of reasons why photography is so annoying. Its relationship to reproduction will always be an uneven fit in an art world whose markets value scarcity and uniqueness. Add to that the conditions of Photoshop where one stops in states, and finds oneself with the possibility of endless doing and undoing. Nothing digital is ever really done when the past can be recovered. All of this is uncomfortable, but it's also funny.





Lucas Blalock lives and works in New York. His photographs have been exhibited

internationally, including recent solo shows at Galerie Eva Presenhuber (Zurich) and Espace Images (Vevey). Blalock has been included in group exhibitions at institutions such as C/O Berlin (Berlin); Walker Art Center (Minneapolis); Bergen Kunsthall (Bergen); Museum of Modern Art (New York); Hammer Museum (Los Angeles); Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York); and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (Houston). In 2019, Blalock will be the subject of a solo show at Los Angeles' Institute of Contemporary Art.



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publisher: Primary Information

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review by Sarah Bradley

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