

ARTFORUM

Mathieu Briand

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Going from bright Los Angeles sunshine into the darkened rooms of the latest installment of Mathieu Briand's *Ubiq: A Mental Odyssey* is a disorienting experience, and not only because your eyes momentarily grope for their bearings. Since his show last year at REDCAT, Briand has been mining a sci-fi vein, in particular the style and language of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, echoing the film's epic temporal leaps with his own wry juxtapositions. Just inside the entrance is a diorama-like space in which a tiny pirate ship slowly rotates in front of a glowing moon. This surreal combination of presence and artifice is reminiscent of a music box or a Disneyland attraction. By marooning a fifteenth-century ship (with its imperial associations) in outer space, Briand compares early European global conquest to space exploration, exposing the childish fantasy of mastery that underlies them both.

Two large video projections also undercut expectations of the sublime. The first pans across what looks like a barren moonscape; the second shows the moon orbiting into and out of the frame. It soon becomes clear that both are live feeds from a small model landscape rotating on the floor nearby. While alluding to the conspiracy theory that the 1969 moonwalk was staged, the work reveals the visual apparatus—in this case, video—by which the tiny and fake becomes the grand and mysterious. The model's toylike scale and rudimentary technology immediately deflate the majesty of the videos, suggesting that more than scientific curiosity or economic necessity, it is our desire to believe in transcendence that fuels our continual fabrication of ridiculous new frontiers.

— Sharon Mizota

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