

Emilia Pesantes, "Exhibition Review: Troy Brauntuch at Petzel Gallery," *Musée Magazine*, January 23, 2020.

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Jan 23 Exhibition Review: Troy Brauntuch at Petzel Gallery

EXHIBITION REVIEW, REVIEWS



Installation view of *Troy Brauntuch*. © Troy Brauntuch, courtesy Petzel Gallery. Photo: Lauren Hoffman

By [Emilia Pesantes](#)

The absolute stillness of a second-floor room in an unobtrusive Upper East Side building may just be the perfect location for Troy Brauntuch's latest solo exhibition, *A Strange New Beauty*. The body of work, housed in Petzel Gallery, is exactly what the name suggests – beautiful.

Petzel

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Frame by frame, Brauntuch's haunting images neatly line the walls of two large open rooms. Whether you are privy to Brauntuch's approach or not, it is immediately evident that the photos gathered, stuck to the walls like diplomas hung up by a proud mother, are not the least bit ordinary. Upon first glance, the photos' immaculate, yet notably distinct, printing quality jumps out. If you've read up on the show before entering, you'd know that this effect is due to the artists' use of 20th-century printing processes such as the use of metal image substrates like magnesium to create photos. If you walked into the gallery without the faintest idea of any of this, like me, the effect is just the same. In this case, it is possibly even more effective in exposing the photos' delightful strangeness.

It's only when you step forward, peering into the photo as if to become a part of it, that you notice the obvious, though seemingly effortless, superimposition of images in a frame. The first sequence of photos is unblemished and perfectly symmetrical. On an inverted black and white slate, designer bags appear captive in glass cases reminiscent of those used to protect precious artifacts in a museum. On another wall, a series of photos that unmistakably transport you into an established museum space combines the same glass casing with different sculptures, of a light opacity, in the background. In front of this, there is a stunning collection of museum spaces that look more like they are scanned pencil drawings, also inverted in black and white.

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Brauntuch's show is comprised of archival image material reproduced from the cultural institutions of Nazi Germany and repurposed to shed light on importance placed throughout time. What is significant and who gets to decide? The designer bag in the 21st century may be of equal importance than the artworks collected by high society a century earlier.

By exhibiting images, manipulated to varying degrees, of exhibitions and the pieces that they consist of, Brauntuch produces something new indeed – something that contemplates the act of displaying for the masses as much as it contemplates that which is displayed.



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