Brad Freeman has been making artist's books using offset printing as a creative printmaking medium since the late 1970s. In this piece, adapted from his work in progress, MzLk, he combines traditional and digital darkroom techniques to explore the time-based aspects of a sequence of printed pages, investigating temporality through a variety of features. First, one sees the creative processes of production displayed from sketchbook to layout and mock-up in the dummy stage, to the final product made in the digital darkroom from scanned and manipulated images. The time spent making, thinking, and working out the book's pages becomes manifest as a material fact. Second, one experiences the time of the images themselves—historical time within the photographs and a record of passing time in certain of the sequences. With one exception, all the images in this work move forward, following the Western convention of reading from left to right. But the echoing process of transformation—from notes to sketch to image—invites the viewer/reader to look backward, replaying the temporal sequence of the forward-moving action of the work. The single counterpoint is the image of a nineteenth-century chromolithograph advertising a form of poisoned-plate fly bait. The only found or appropriated image in the work, it contains a grotesquely caricatured, racially stereotyped image of an African American, typical of certain social perceptions of the time. This image, significantly, turns its back on the images of contemporary racism manifest in Freeman's documentary photographs of a Klan march in north Florida in the mid-1970s. The sense of time conveyed by these pages, the sequence and ordering of the images, the temporal references and specificity of the images themselves—all this amounts to a complex ordering of printed pages. Freeman takes advantage of the digital darkroom—with its combination of photographic, graphic, and painting tools all in a single, clean, and readily accessible environment. Once the province of an entire team of craftsmen, each with his or her own skill—typography, layout, design, paste-up, stripping, and camera work—the digital studio permits a wide range of technical possibilities within a single space. It is still the responsibility of the artist to understand from the beginning what the requirements of the final output will be. In this case, in spite of all the digital manipulations, the end product is ink on paper, a print, offset printed and mass produced.

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