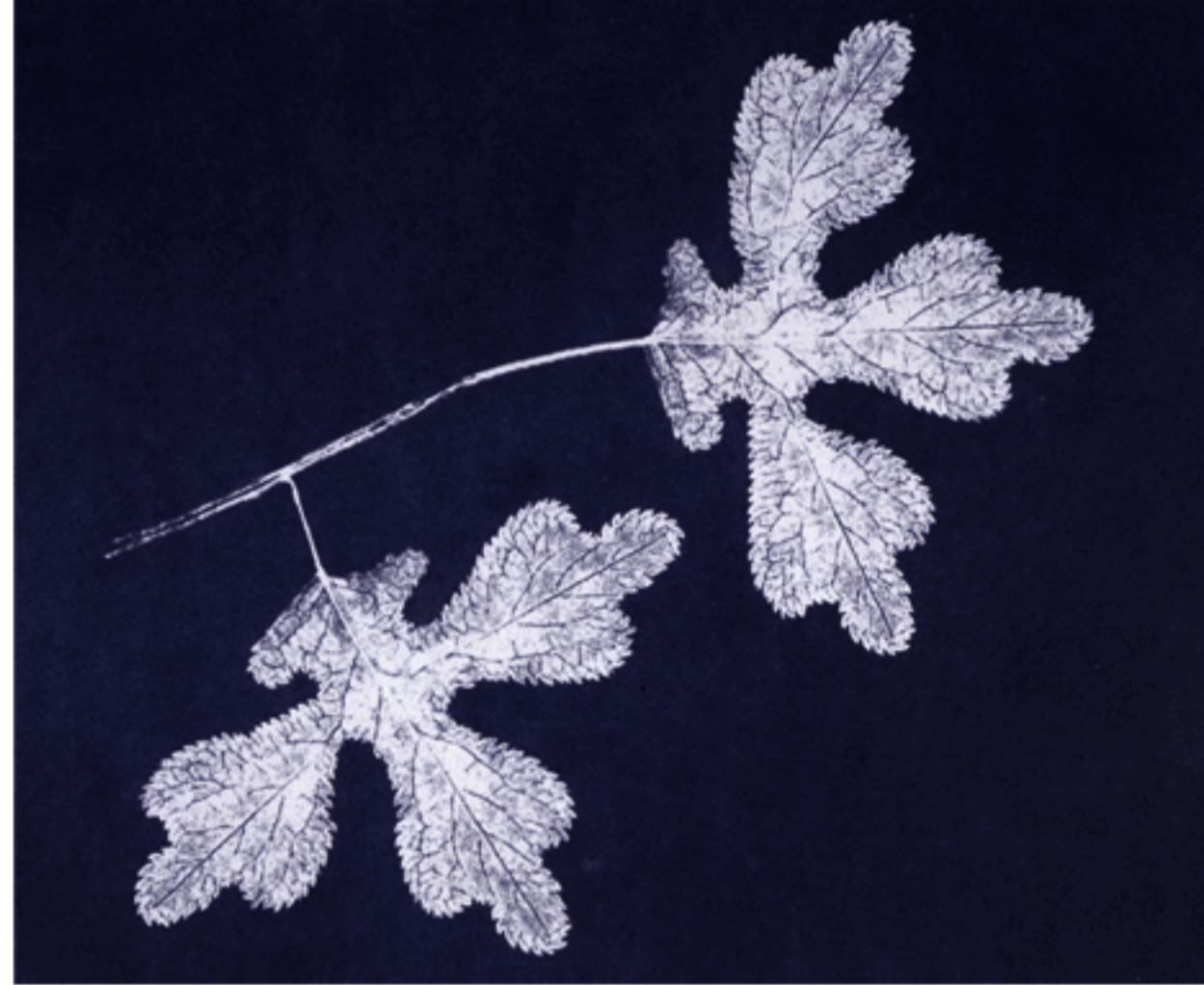


Keith Cottingham
Ronald Feldman Fine
Arts, through Apr 17
(see Soho).

It's hard not to compare Keith Cottingham with Thomas Demand, James Casebere and Craig Kalpakjian. All four photograph their own models of architectural spaces—or, in Kalpakjian's case, construct them digitally. The result is realistic-looking photos of fake spaces that ontologically undercut the authority of photography by showing how the medium, a supposed purveyor of truth, is complicit in a lie. But Cottingham has a wider range than the others; he also uses sculptural and digital materials to construct people and objects. This is a good thing, since his architectural works lack the subtle beauty and cohesion of Demand's and Casebere's, or the hipness of Kalpakjian's techno-conceptualism.

The first room in this show is filled with images of modernist architectural spaces and figures reminiscent of Soviet Social Realist sculpture. The second gallery, which includes work from the last five years, is more successful. Here, amid the eerie imagery, is a digitally rendered botanical speci-



Keith Cottingham, *Botanicals (Leaves #1)*, 1999.

men; it looks just like a photogram by William Henry Fox Talbot that's on view practically around the corner, at the Drawing Center.

Like Cottingham's picture, Talbot's photograms were executed without a camera (they were made by placing objects on chemically treated paper). Forging this connection between the two artists—it helps to have Talbot close at hand—places Cottingham in a good light. He might not be the best fake-architecture photographer out there, but his work is part of a tradition stretching back to the earliest days of photography: artists exploiting what is by nature a highly mutable and experimental medium.—*Martha Schwendener*