

# M+B

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### Questioning the expectations of photography

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT  
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After photography was introduced in the mid 19th century, painters had to rethink their art, to push at the possibilities of their medium. Impressionism, with its fluttering brush strokes and attention to light and color, followed.

The artists featured in "Process Priority" at Steven Zevitas Gallery all work in photography, but they question the definitions and expectations of their medium in the same way the Impressionists did (and painters have ever since).

The funny thing about this show is how painterly it is. Artists have experimented with photography since it began, and in the early days of art photography, they sought to re-create the feel of painting with blurry focus. Here, the focus is more on process than image.

Mariah Robertson's spectacularly fluid "68" pours and jitters down a long, irregular strip of photographic paper. A right angle juts down from the top, filled with burbling diagonal streaks in tropical, aquatic tones. When palette and texture change below, it's like you've gone from snorkeling in the Mediterranean to soaking in a sooty evening downpour in London. Those watery browns and lavenders run into vapors and speckles of cyan. It's a breathless rush of color and gesture.

More darkroom pyrotechnics come from Matthew Brandt, who dips his landscape photograph in lake water, apparently as it develops, and Tamar Halpern, whose "The Ghost Sonata" layers what might be a transparency with a hole burned through it over a granular, rust-striped plane.



"68" by Mariah Robertson

Others work more traditionally, but their imagery pushes toward abstraction. Barbara Kasten makes models out of screens and Plexiglas, which she photographs. Her "Scene VIII" uses light, reflection, transparency, and shadow to lead the eye down spatial rabbit holes. Bryan Graf's "Lattice (Ambient) 112" is a straightforward photogram; he puts a mass of crumpled mesh on photographic paper and exposes it to light. The resulting yellow explosion on the left is flowerlike, with petals unfolding in blues and greens in a dizzying moiré effect.

Zevitas has a history of mounting the most rigorous, truly contemporary summer group shows in Boston. This one fits the bill.