

*cfaal 313* by Jessica Eaton.  
Images courtesy of UCR ARTSblock

## THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Riverside's CMP approaches contemporary photography in a great new series of exhibitions

By S.A. Hawkins

The California Museum of Photography (CMP) is the stronger older brother to the Culver Center of the Arts, together making up two of three parts of UCR's ARTSblock. The CMP is the modern-day version of a white cube, with large steel appendages and industrial architecture. Sitting atop the third floor of the CMP is a small and interesting corner room that has been newly rebranded as the FLASH Gallery, an experimental project space within the larger context of the museum. Curator Joanna Szupinska-Myers' vision for the FLASH series of exhibitions is to provide a dedicated space for solo shows of up and coming contemporary photographers.

Within the context of any large institution/museum, pre-planning is an utter necessity, large high dollar exhibitions take years of logistically planning. The beauty of this intimate gallery is its immediacy. Exhibitions can be installed and changed at seemingly a moments notice, allowing the curator flexibility to show amazing works that don't happen to fit into the context of the museum's upcoming programming. It is a room for spontaneity and experimentation; a possible home for hidden gems found during one of many studio visits, and most importantly, a place for the curator to "live with the work" as she conjures grand plans for the future.

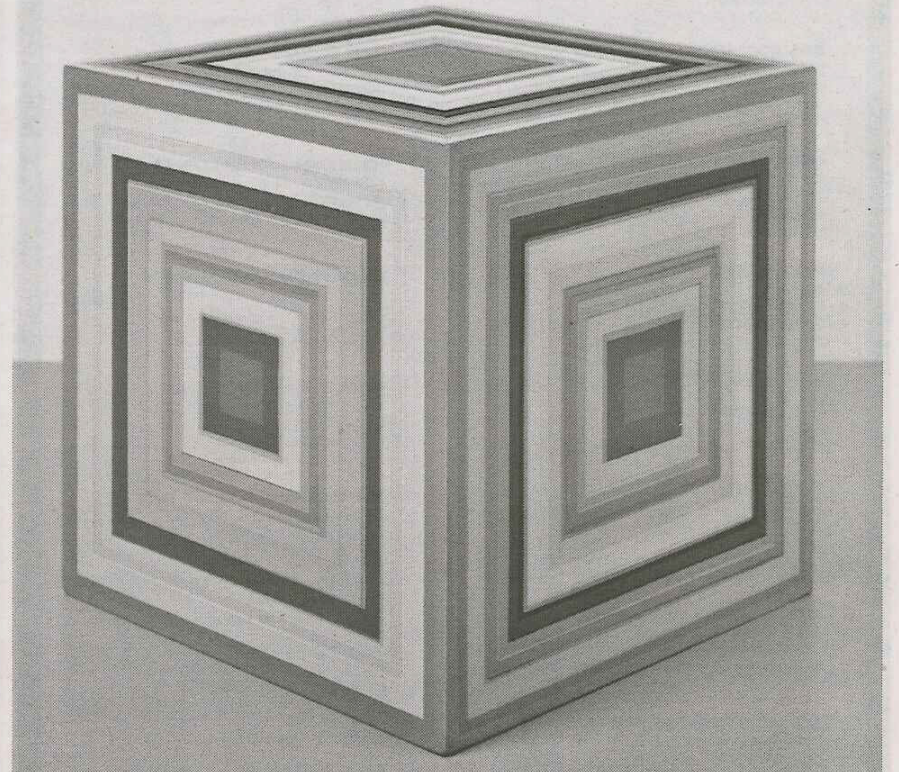
Juxtaposed in amazing fashion, the

entrance to the CMP's Camera Obscura is located directly next to the entrance of the FLASH Gallery. It seems so perfect that in a museum containing vast quantities of photographic history—including the world's largest collection of stereoscopic negatives—also offers a new contemporary exhibition space. Past, present and future are rubbing elbows.

The current exhibition is of artist Jessica Eaton, a non-conventional minimalist photographer. The work is simple, beautiful, familiar and yet utterly confusing. Walking in the room the viewer is met straight on by what is seemingly an illustrated or painted reference to a cube. The mind is enthralled by the work, but confusion sets in as one tries to pin down the process used to create this artwork. After all, the gallery is in a photographic museum, meaning that it is unlikely that this work is either an illustration or a painting.

While the work is tangible, a framed object hanging on the wall, it has that intangible ability to affect our minds in a way that many great artworks do. How can one explain the feeling of turning a corner at MOCA and coming face to face with a monolithic Rothko? The human body is physically affected by the artist's use of color, hue, orientation and technique.

Jessica Eaton's work *cfaal 313* has much the same affect on the viewer: This feeling comes part from the imagery, but also from her experimentation and utter knowledge of



the photographic process. In all actuality, the artwork is simply a still-life photograph of a cube with hand painted concentric bands of color, sitting on a neutral table-like surface. Many may say, "the devil is in the details," with this style of artwork, the "magic is in the process."

Eaton does not simply snap a still-life image and call it a day, rather she endlessly repositions, re-exposes, slightly modifies or repaints the cube, exposes again, over and over until what was seen on each different exposure begins to meld with what our minds interpret as an object in a photo. The final image is truly based on manipulation and distortion within the technical end of the analog photograph making process.

In this day and age of "save as" photo

manipulation it is so interesting to watch the traditional process being used in most contemporary of ways. This is not a "digital effect" or some command on photoshop, but rather the genius tinkering of an artist that truly knows the analog process.

The FLASH Series of Exhibitions is an amazing new asset to the programming of the California Museum of Photography and UCR's ARTSblock as a whole. I was lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the next upcoming FLASH exhibition of works by Job Piston, which proves to be yet another amazing show. □

**FLASH: Jessica Eaton** at California Museum of Photography, UCR ARTSblock, 3824 Main St., Riverside, (909) 827-4787; [artsblock.ucr.edu](http://artsblock.ucr.edu). Thru Oct. 26. \$3.