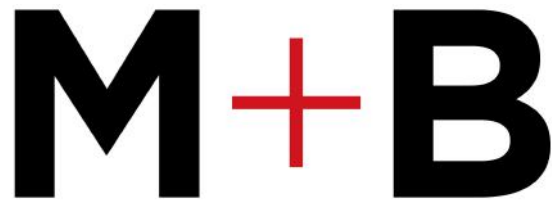


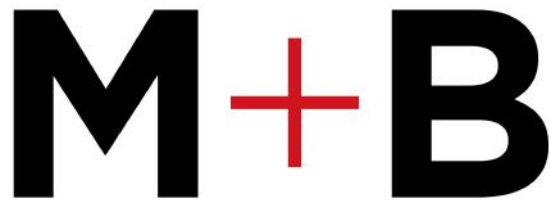
MARIAH ROBERTSON

Press Pack



## MARIAH ROBERTSON

**Mariah Robertson** (b. 1975) received her BA from University of California, Berkeley and her MFA from Yale University. She has exhibited widely at public and private institutions, including the exhibitions *A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; *Outside the Lines: Rites of Spring* at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; and *Process and Abstraction* at the Cleveland Museum of Art's Transformer Station. Other exhibitions include *Mariah Robertson* at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, UK; *Greater New York* at MoMA/PS1, New York; and *Mariah Robertson: Let's Change* at Grand Arts, Kansas City. Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among others. Mariah Robertson lives and works in Brooklyn, and this is her second solo exhibition with the gallery.



## MARIAH ROBERTSON

**BORN** 1975  
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

### EDUCATION

2005 MFA, Yale University, New Haven, CT  
1997 BA, University of California at Berkeley, CA

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2018 *Fun Packed Holiday*, Lora Reynolds, Houston, TX  
*The Hydra*, M+B, Los Angeles, CA

2017 *Chaos Power Center*, 11R, New York, NY

2016 Two-person exhibition with Jennie Jieun Lee, Eleven Rivington, New York, NY

2015 *Photography Lovers' Peninsula*, M+B, Los Angeles, CA

2014 Paris Photo Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

2013 *Permanent Puberty*, American Contemporary, New York, NY  
NADA Miami Beach, Miami, FL

2012 Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (Performance)  
Kogod Courtyard, Washington, D.C. (Performance)  
*Let's Change*, Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO

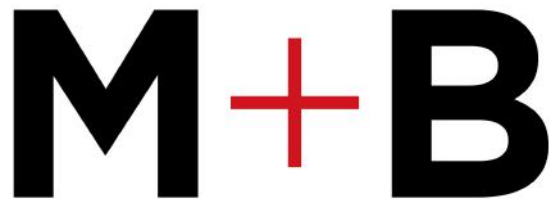
2011 Central Utah Art Center, Ephraim, UT  
BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, curated by Laurence Sillars, Gateshead, UK  
*HOT TROPICAL RAIN JAM*, Museum 52, New York, NY  
MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY (Performance)

2010 ARTFORUM, Berlin, Germany

2009 *Take Better Pictures*, Museum 52, New York, NY  
*I Am Passions*, Marvelli Gallery, New York, NY  
Guild & Greyshkul, New York, NY (Performance)

2007 *Nudes, Still Lives and Landscapes*, Guild & Greyshkul, New York, NY

2006 *Please lie down and take a nap with me in my grave*, Guild & Greyshkul, New York, NY

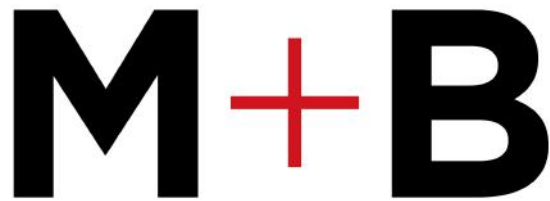


## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2018      *Screenspace*, curated by Vik Muniz, Lucas Blalock, and Barney Kulok, Nara Roesler Gallery, São Paulo, Brazil
- 2017      *Contra*, Fine Arts Center Gallery, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR  
*Photoplay: Lucid Objects (from the JP Morgan Chase Art Collection)*, Paris Photo, Paris, France
- 2016      *New Photography*, BAM, Brooklyn, NY  
*Island States*, Tops Gallery, Memphis, TN  
*This is a Photograph*, Penland Gallery, Penland, NC  
*Surrogates*, Griffin Art Projects, Vancouver, BC  
*World Made By Hand*, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, NY  
Arturo Bandini, Los Angeles, CA  
*Cut-Up*, Franklin Street Works, Stamford, CT
- 2015      *Russian Doll*, M+B, Los Angeles, CA  
*Panic Pants*, organized by Tatiana Kronberg, Essex Flowers, New York, NY  
*Back to the Real*, David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO  
*Part Picture*, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, ON  
*Jessica Eaton, Mariah Robertson, Alison Rossiter*, Cleveland Museum of Art's Transformer Station, Cleveland, OH  
*Picture/Thing*, Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University Center for the Arts, CT  
*Color Fields*, Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, MA
- 2014      *Modern Alchemy: Experiments in Photography*, The Heckscher Museum of Art, NY  
*CHEM 101: The Science of Photography*, The William Benton Museum of Art at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT  
*The Material Image*, curated by Debra Singer, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY  
*By Proxy*, James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY  
*Me and Benjamin*, curated by M+B, Galerie Xippas, Paris  
*Broken Surface Artificial Matter*, Halsey McKay Gallery, New York  
*Aggregate Exposure*, George Lawson Gallery, San Francisco  
*Process Priority*, Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston, MA  
*A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY  
*Outside the Lines: Rites of Spring*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas  
*What is a Photograph?*, International Center of Photography, New York, NY
- 2013      *19 New Acquisitions in Photography*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY  
*How Things are Made (an exhibition in 3 parts)*, Spot Welders, New York, NY  
*Old Black*, Team Gallery, New York, NY  
*Under My Skin*, Flowers Gallery, New York, NY  
*Desire*, Yancey Richardson, New York, NY

# M+B

- 2012 *Photography, Sculpture, Figure*, M+B, Los Angeles, CA  
*Out of Focus*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK  
*Manscape: Man as Subject and Object*, Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, TX  
*The Space in Between*, Steven Zevitas, Boston, MA  
*Second Nature: Abstract Photography Then and Now*, de Cordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA  
*Hi Jack!*, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, NY  
*Space Invaders*, Lehman College Art Gallery, New York, NY  
*The Hort Family Collection*, New York, NY  
*Someone Puts Together A Pineapple*, Acme, Los Angeles, CA
- 2011 *Cry Baby Presents*, Los Angeles, CA  
*Fight or Flight*, curated by Justin Lieberman, Franklin Parrasch, New York, NY  
*Process(ing)*, Galerie Perrotin, Paris, France  
*Perfectly Damaged*, Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Against The Way Things Go*, Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert, Inc. New York, NY  
*Channel to the New Image*, Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York, NY
- 2010 *Greater New York*, ps1/MoMA  
*Skins*, OHWOW Gallery, Miami, FL  
*50 Artists Photograph the Future*, Higher Pictures, New York, NY  
*Mexican Blanket*, Museum 52, London, UK  
*Color as Form: Playing the Spectrum*, Silver Eye Centre for Photography, Pittsburgh, PA  
*A World Like Tomorrow Wears Things Out*, Sikkema Jenkins, New York, NY  
*IN SIDE OUT*, Susan Inglett Gallery, New York, NY  
*Greenberg Van Doren Gallery*, New York, NY  
*Transfer Function*, Zieher Smith, New York, NY
- 2009 *XOXO*, Apartment Show, Brooklyn, NY  
*If the Dogs are Barking*, Apartment Show at Artists Space, New York, NY  
*Experimental Photography*, Marvelli Gallery, New York, NY  
*The Company Presents: A Video Screening*, Miami Beach, FL  
*Wrong: A Program of Text and Image*, Eight Veil, Los Angeles, CA  
*I'm Feeling Lucky*, P.P.O.W Gallery, New York, NY  
*On From Here*, Guildt & Greyskul, New York, NY
- 2008 *Sonata for Executioner and Various Young Women*, André Schechtriem Contemporary, New York, NY  
*Deadliest Catch! Hampton's*, CORE: Hamptons, NY  
*From Viennese Actionism to the Triumph of Vince Young*, CRG Gallery, New York, NY  
*FRIENDLY*, organized by Sam Clagnaz and Tommy Hartung, New York, NY
- 2007 *Divine Find*, Stonefox Artspace, New York, NY  
*A Moving World*, Gallery w52, New York, NY  
*Where To: Artists Environ a Cab*, The Lab, San Francisco, CA  
*Practical F/X*, Mary Boone Gallery, New York, NY  
*STUFF: International Contemporary Art from the Collection of Burt Aaron*, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, MI



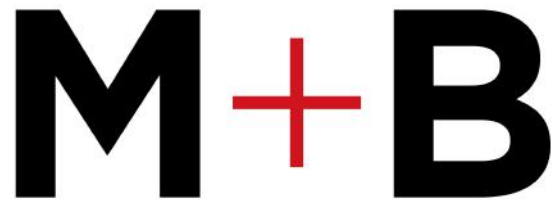
- 2006 *Haunted States Grand Arts*, Kansas City, KS  
*The Truth About Susan Gescheidle*, The Centre of Attention, Chicago, IL  
*The SevSenth Side of the Die*, Alona Kagan Gallery, New York, NY  
*Help Yourself*, Helen Pitt Gallery, Vancouver, BC
- 2005 *Loop Video Festival*, Barcelona, Spain  
*Video Pleasures of the East Worth Ryder Gallery*, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA  
*Early February*, Green Hall Gallery, New Haven, CT  
*Community Theater Art Space Annex*, New Haven, CT
- 2003 *Great Indoors*, Walter Gallery, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 2002 *Shit Hot Lucky*, Tackle Gallery, Oakland, CA  
*Element of the Temporary Southern Exposure*, San Francisco, CA
- 2001 *Just Short Raid Projects*, Los Angeles, CA  
*Red Wine & High Heels Lair of the Minotaur*, San Francisco, CA

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- 2016 Knoblauch, Loring. "Jennie Jieun Lee | Mariah Robertson@ 11R", Collector Daily, January 20  
Bodin, Claudia. "Außer Kontrolle." Art Das Kunst Magazin, January 3
- 2015 "Paradoxical Abstraction," Artpress, March 2015  
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Jovanovic, Rozalia and Vanessa Yurkevich, "What is a Photograph? at the ICP", Blouin Artinfo, February 4  
Johnson, Ken. "Digital, Analog, and Waterlogged," The New York Times, January 30
- 2013 Russeth, Andrew. 'Mariah Robertson: Permanent Puberty' at American Contemporary, Gallerist NY, November 19  
Aletti, Vince. "Goings on About Town: Art-Mariah Robertson," The New Yorker,

# M+B

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Small, Rachel. "Mariah Robertson's Unplanning," Interview Magazine, October 31  
Knoblauch, Loring. "Mariah Robertson, Permanent Puberty at American Contemporary," Collector Daily, November 8
- 2012  
McQuaid, Gabe. "Breaking Down Boundaries at Zevitas," The Boston Globe, July 25  
*Pin Up*, Spring/Summer  
Rosenberg, Karen. "Another Fair Makes a Debut and Aims to Lure the Collectors Already in Town," The New York Times, May 4  
Robertson, Mariah. "Unflattering Self Portraits," The Huffington Post (blog), April 26  
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Steward, Sue. "Out of Focus: Photography, Saatchi Gallery-review," London Evening Standard, April 25  
Duponchelle, Valerie. "Quand SM la Reine Pose les Yeux Fermes," Le Figaro, April 25  
Durrant, Nancy. "Out of Focus at the Saatchi Gallery, SW3," The Times, April 25  
Thorson, Alice. "Nothing Square About These Pics," The Kansas City Star, February 24  
Robertson, Mariah. "Let's Change," Huff Post Arts, February 23  
Tuck, Geoff. "Gregory Edwards, Caitlin Lonegan, William J. O'Brian, and Mariah Robertson at Acme," Notes on Looking, February 3
- 2011  
Wiley, Chris. "Ryan Trecartin, Willem De Kooning, New York Solo Photo Shows," Artforum, December  
Wiley, Chris. "Depth of Focus," FRIEZE Issue 43, November – December  
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"Goings on About Town, Mariah Robertson," The New Yorker, March 12  
Bailey, Laura. "Mariah Robertson," Laura Bailey's Blog/Vogue.com, February 28
- 2010  
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Kerr, Merrily. Time Out New York, Issue 777, August  
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Ruckick, Nicole. "Critics Pick," Artforum, October 28  
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- 2007  
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Leung, Cynthia. "Cynthia Leung Talked to Mariah Robertson," NY ARTS Magazine November – December
- 2006  
Thorson, Alice. "A Crisis of Self," The Kansas



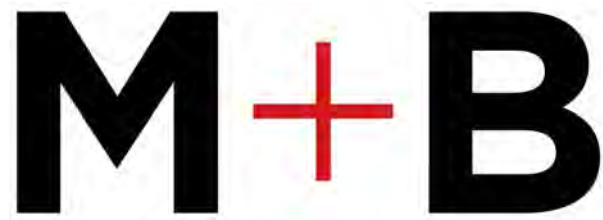
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- 2014 "Mariah Robertson's Chemical Reactions", ART21 New York Close Up, <http://vimeo.com/109264994>
- 2012 "A Naked Guy Walks into a Mariah Robertson Photo", ART21 New York Close Up, <http://vimeo.com/35019029>  
"Mariah Robertson, August 2012", <http://vimeo.com/47463624>
- 2011 "Mariah Robertson Wears a Yellow Suit to Work", ART21 New York Close Up, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBhjhQnt3P0>  
"Inside the Artist's Studio: Mariah Robertson," Paddle 8, <http://vimeo.com/27207962>

#### **COLLECTIONS**

The Sir Elton John Photography Collection  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
UBS Art Collection, New York  
Cleveland Clinic, Ohio  
Bidwell Projects, Ohio  
JP Morgan Chase Art Collection  
North Carolina Museum of Art





MARIAH ROBERTSON

Selected Portfolio

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *The Hydra*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles  
January 13, 2018 – February 17, 2018

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *The Hydra*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles  
January 13, 2018 – February 17, 2018

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
Installation View of *The Hydra*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles  
January 13, 2018 – February 17, 2018

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
216, 2017  
unique chromogenic print  
80 1/2 x 50 inches (204.5 x 127 cm)  
(MR.17.216.81)



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
106, 2017  
unique chromogenic print  
57 x 49 inches (144.8 x 124.5 cm)  
(MR.17.106.57)

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
265, 2017  
unique chromogenic print  
33 1/4 x 49 inches (84.5 x 124.5 cm)  
(MR.17.265.34)

# M+B

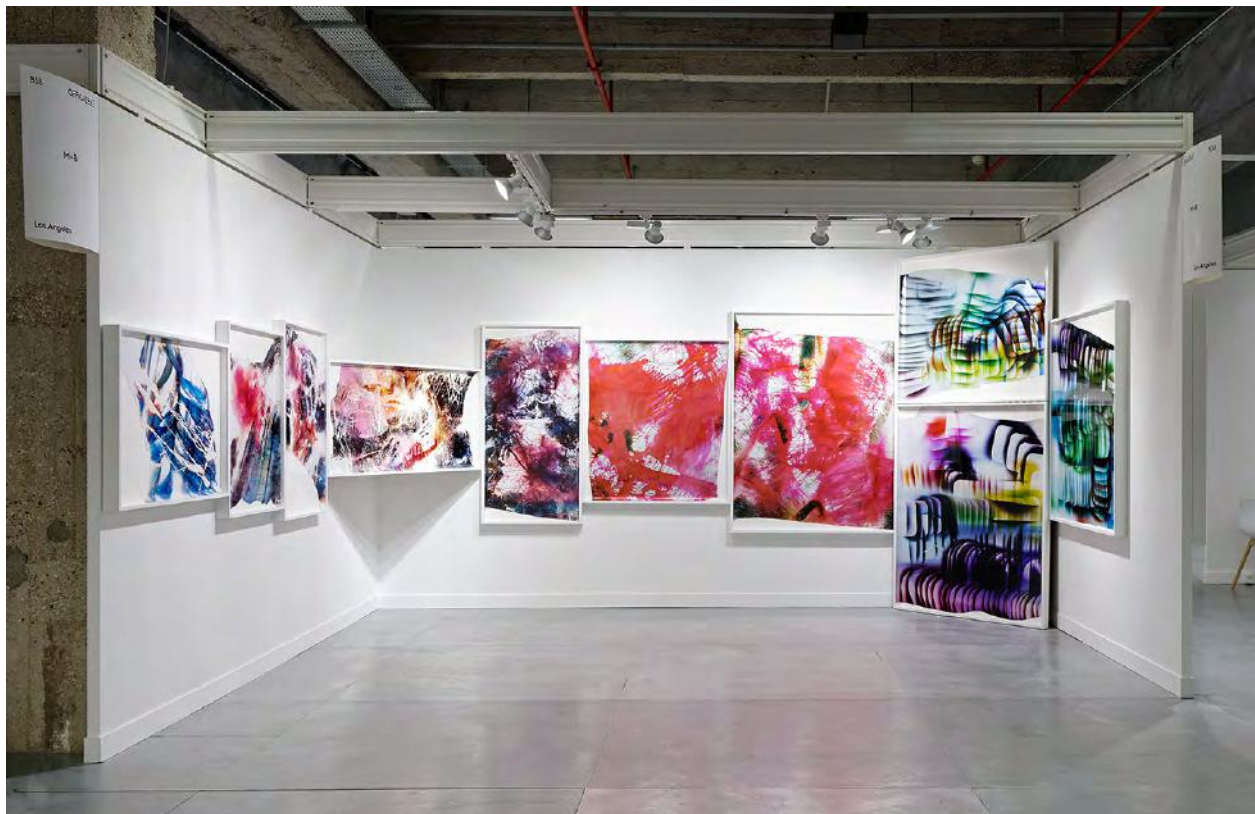


**Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *Jennie Jieun Lee* | *Mariah Robertson*, two-person show at 11r, New York, NY  
January 10 – February 7, 2016



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
Installation View of *Mariah Robertson* at FIAC'S (OFF)ICIELLE, Paris  
October 21 – 25, 2015

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation view of *Part Picture*, group show at  
the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (MoCCA), Toronto  
May 2 – 31, 2015



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation view of *Photography Lovers' Peninsula*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles  
February 14 – May 2, 2015

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation view of *Photography Lovers' Peninsula*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles  
February 14 – May 2, 2015

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

268, 2014

unique chemical treatment on RA-4 paper  
129-½ x 73-½ x 2-¾ inches (328.9 x 186.7 x 7 cm)  
(MR.14.268.129)



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

343, 2014

unique chemical treatment on RA-4 paper

73-½ x 101-½ x 2-¾ inches (186.7 x 257.8 x 7 cm)

(MR.14.343.73)

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation view of *Process and Abstraction*, three-person show at  
Cleveland Museum of Art's Transformer Station, Cleveland, OH  
February 7 – May 2, 2015

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation view of *Modern Alchemy: Experiments in Photography*,  
group show at Heckscher Museum of Art, New York  
December 6, 2014 – March 15, 2015



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
32, 2014  
unique chemical treatment on RA-4 paper  
73 x 73 inches (185.4 x 185.4 cm)  
(MR.14.032.72)



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
82, 2014  
unique color treatment on RA-4 paper  
50 x 61 inches (127 x 154.9 cm)  
(MR.14.082.50)

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
Installation View of *Mariah Robertson* at Paris Photo Los Angeles 2014  
April 25 – April 27, 2014



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *Mariah Robertson* at Paris Photo Los Angeles 2014  
April 25 – April 27, 2014

# M+B

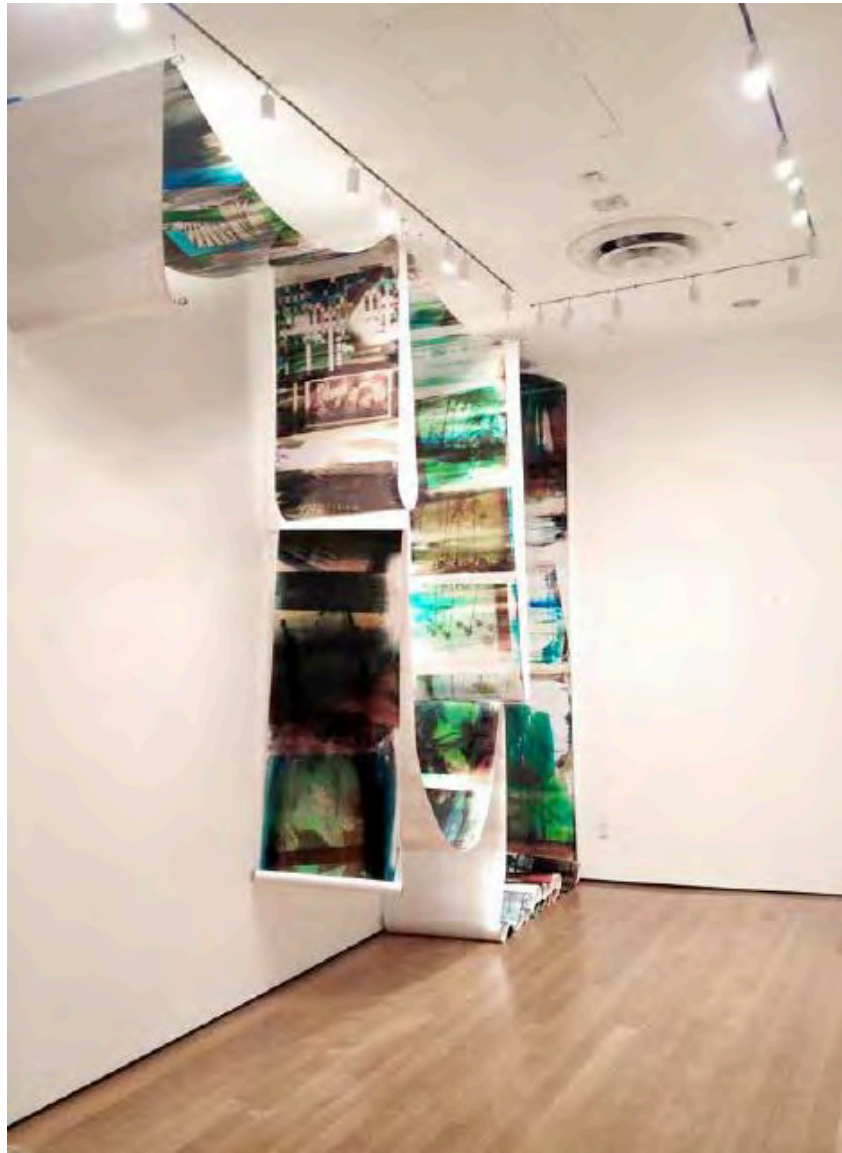


**Mariah Robertson**

12, 2012

unique chemical treatment on RA-4 paper in plexi box frame  
30 inches x 100 feet print in a 20 x 20 x 30 inch plexi box frame  
(MR.12.012.30)

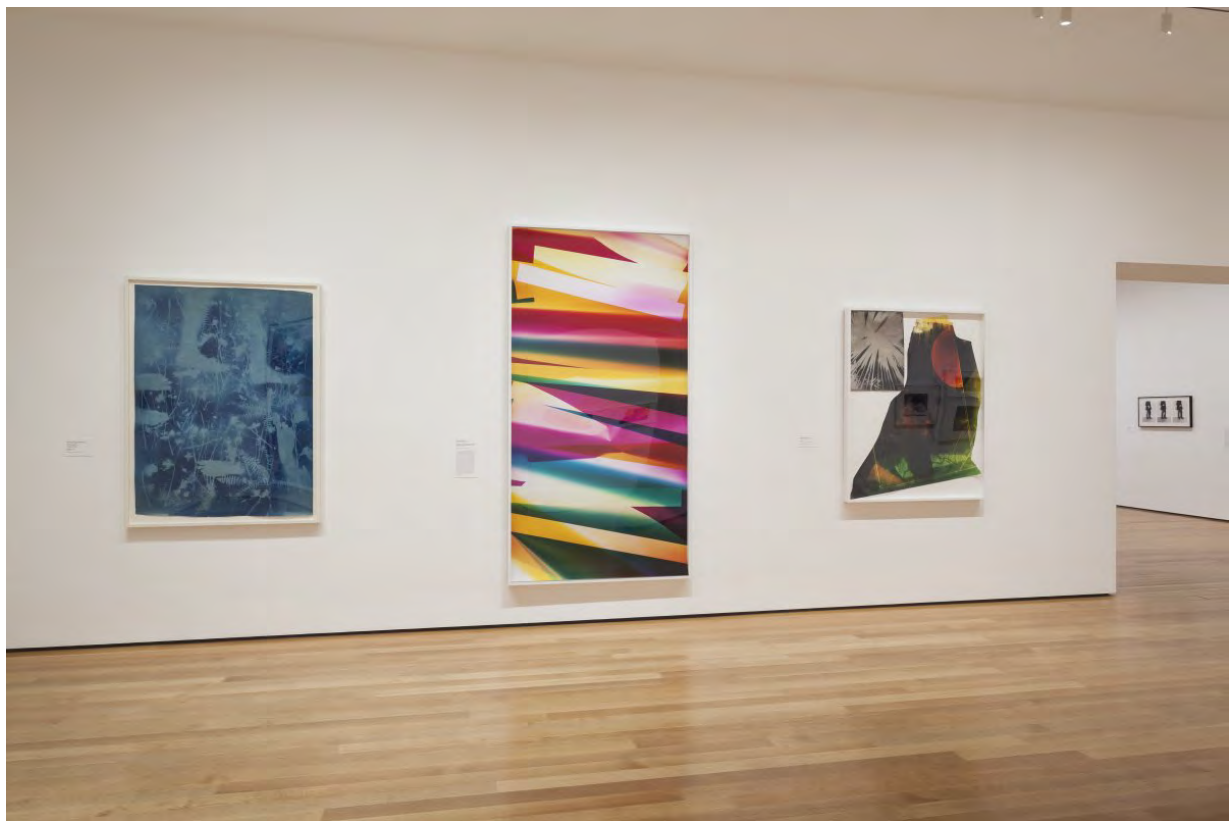
# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *XL: 19 New Acquisitions in Photography*, group exhibition  
at the Museum of Modern Art, New York  
May 10, 2013 – January 6, 2014

# M+B

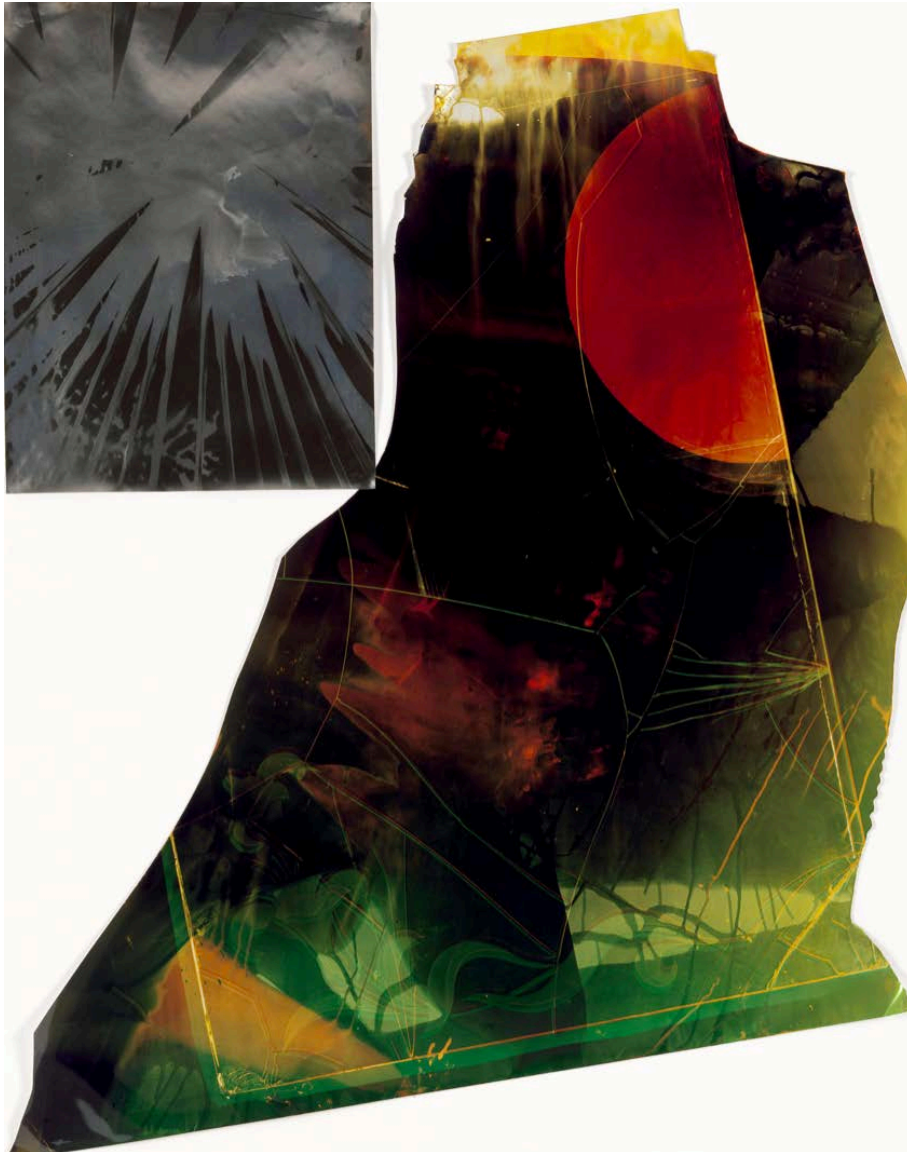


**Mariah Robertson**

Installation view of *A World of its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio*, group exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York  
February 8 – October 5, 2014



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
30, 2009  
gelatin silver and chromogenic color prints  
58 x 46 inches (147.3 x 116.8 cm)  
unique



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *What is a Photograph?*, group show at  
the International Center of Photography, New York  
January 31 – May 4, 2014

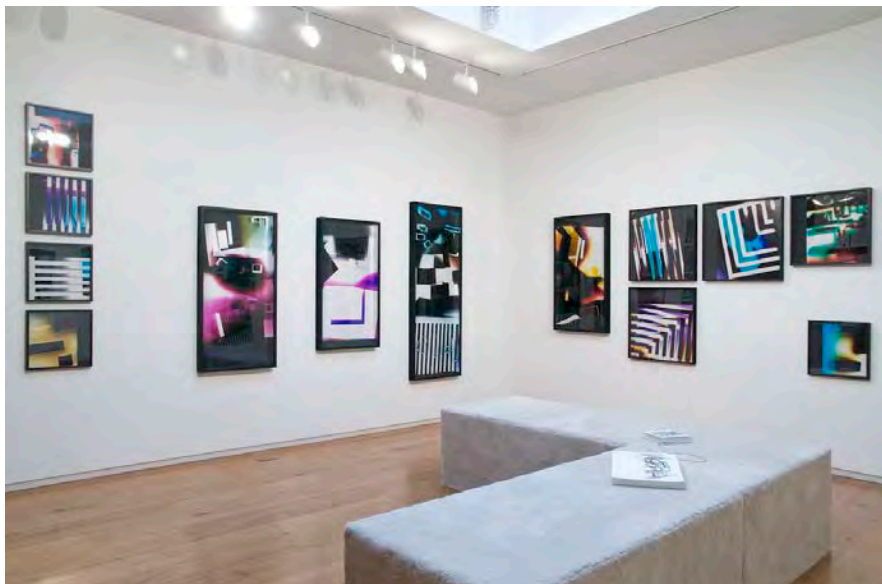
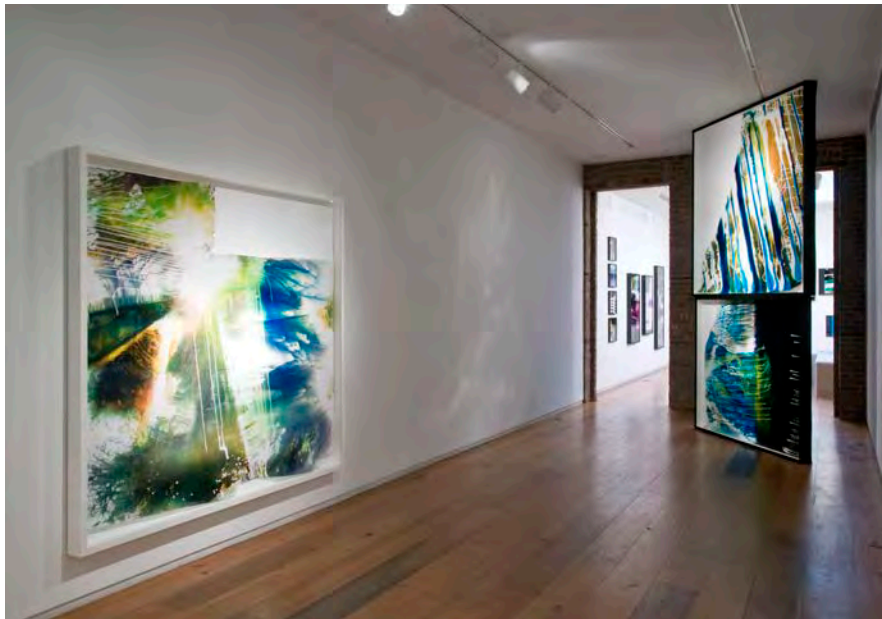
# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *What is a Photograph?*, group show at  
the International Center of Photography, New York  
January 31 – May 4, 2014

# M+B



## **Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *Permanent Puberty*, solo show at American Contemporary, New York  
October 31 – December 20, 2013

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
65, 2013  
unique color print  
25 x 25 inches (63.5 x 63.5 cm)  
(MR.065.25)



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

*105, 2010*

unique color print on metallic paper

57 x 49 inches (144.8 x 124.5 cm)

(MR.10.105.54)

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
Installation View of *Photography Sculpture Figure*, group show at M+B, Los Angeles  
September 15 – October 27, 2012

# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**

Installation View of *Let's Change*, solo show at Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO  
January 20 – April 7, 2012



# M+B

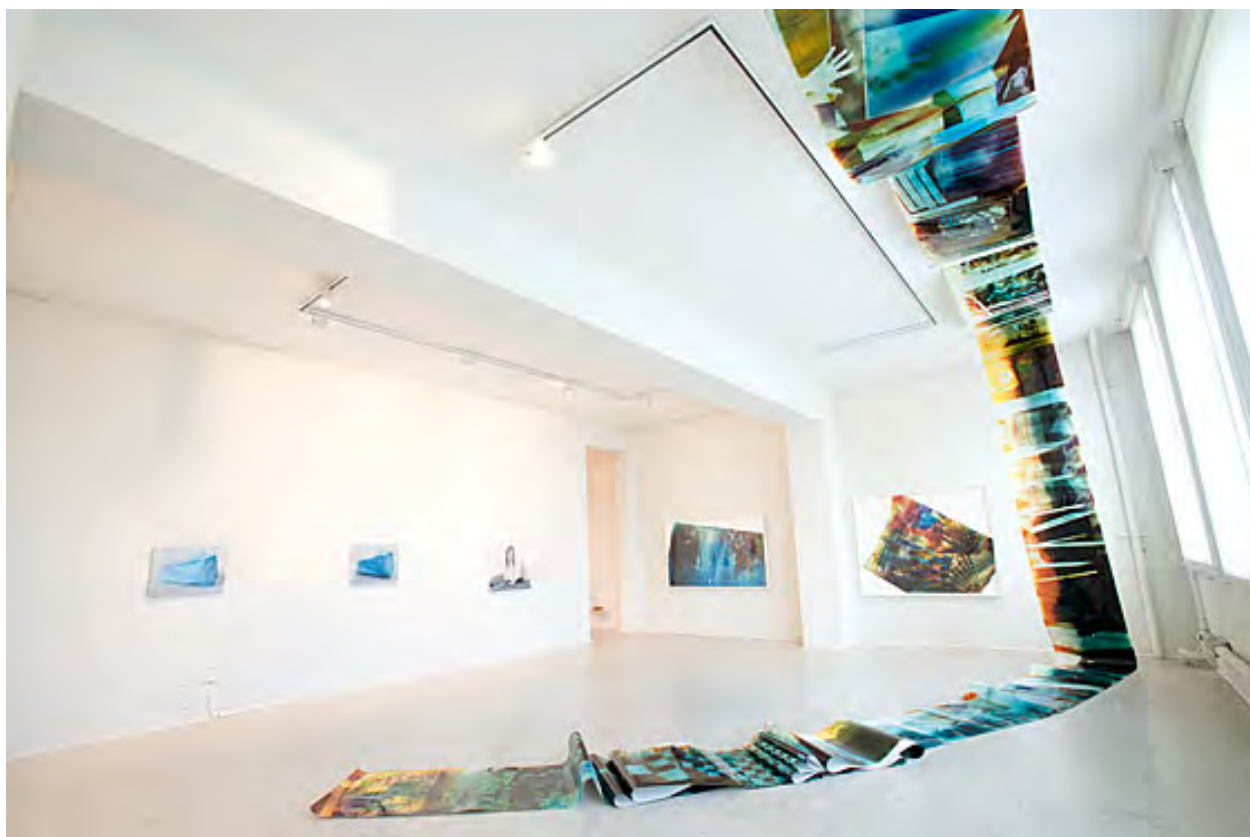


**Mariah Robertson**

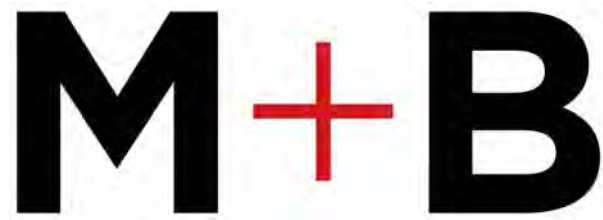
Installation View of 9, solo show at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, UK  
June 25 – October 30, 2011



# M+B



**Mariah Robertson**  
Installation View of 88, group exhibition at MoMA P.S.1, New York  
May 23 – October 18, 2010



MARIAH ROBERTSON

Press and Press Releases

# M+B

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## MARIAH ROBERTSON *The Hydra*

January 13 – February 17, 2018

### Opening Reception

Saturday, January 13, 2018 from 6 to 8 pm

**M+B** is pleased to present *The Hydra*, a solo exhibition of new works by Mariah Robertson on view from January 13 to February 17, 2018. The exhibition is the culmination of several different series that Robertson has been making over the last decade. Much of the work alludes to the body: its representation and all of its problematic attendant power dynamics, along with its necessity, limitations and possibilities in physically producing artwork. In addition to new photograms, the show will present the artist's tintype series of male nudes created over the last year, as well as sketchbook drawings and various ephemera. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, January 13 from 6 to 8pm. The artist will be "dancing like a photon" inside a giant camera, and the public is welcome to join.

*The photograms are made with all the basic components in a darkroom: the enlarger, the table, the timer, some paper, me, and some cardboard. It is the system built for image printing from negatives, for fine control of light. I'm just using the essentialized elements of the light control machine and the human body, a duo made for each other. Moving the cardboard mask, measuring in units of "my fingertips," then up on the toes to hit the color film base layer dial, I cup my hand around the lens to shape the shaft of light, then down to hit the pedal for an exposure, then up on the toes and crank the Yellow and the Magenta and all over again. I know the number combos that make colors . . . 30 Y, 130 M, 2 sec, f2.8 makes this lime green, and then my favorites are the grays which happen around 70Y 70M. The numbers are descending or ascending together in unison or opposition, one descends and calls the other to join it. I spend a lot of time in the dark, obviously. The color darkroom is pitch black; it is painted black to prevent the reflection of light, and the equipment is black.*

*The mobiles are beloved pieces of cardboard that I have been shaping and keeping for years. They started out being made as masks for special darkroom printing, and then they became a wild thing of their own and then they wrapped back around again into being masks. You can see some of their silhouettes in the framed photograms. While working, I would tape them up on the walls of the darkroom to see them, so they are a little like that here.*

*The quilt is mostly from old t-shirts and some nicer pieces are from abandoned projects. The summer I turned thirteen in Sacramento, I started to try to dress goth on a limited budget. Up to that point, in the early color theory exercise known as getting dressed, I had understood black and white to be certain absolute anchors amidst the fluctuations of shade and tints of the rainbow. But then I noticed faded black, slightly greenish polyblend t-shirt black, and realized that it was not absolute, but relative.*

*2017 Tintypes (Nude portraits of men born after I got my period in their New York City apartments) is a collection of mostly nude portraits that were made on-site in young men's apartments in New York City, in the historical photographic process referred to as tintype or wet plate collodion. I made these in collaboration with*

# M+B

*artist Rowan Hasty, who prepared and processed the plates on-site. I started learning photography on the cusp of the two eras. Darkroom and chemical processes were still standard, but so was Photoshop. I love all the historical processes, but I can't understand the uncomplicated nostalgia. This is my adventure in trying to push those specifics of time to extremes, the anachronism of wet plate when everyone has an iPhone, the specifics of domestic life now, the specific time period of youth when your whole life is expressed in your bedroom because you have roommates. This has been a long slow project that inverts the gender binary power dynamic . . . me, a woman who has been making male nude photography for the last ten years.*

*Vagtopia (book of truth or Drawings from a Menstrual State of Mind) is a risograph editioned zine of my drawings from the last five years.*

*The Dance Camera is just for the opening night. It is built to look like a giant view camera and one enters via the shutter like a photon. The first thing I do in the darkroom is usually dance to a few songs to warm up the connection between the unconscious and conscious mind and the hands or the body. I recently talked to a painter friend who does something similar at the beginning of a work session. The playlist is primarily what I have been listening to in the darkroom this past year. This is also a celebration of being alive. I have no formal dance training, just enthusiasm, so don't be shy, join me.*

**Mariah Robertson** (b. 1975) received her BA from University of California, Berkeley and her MFA from Yale University. She has exhibited widely at public and private institutions, including the exhibitions *A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; *Outside the Lines: Rites of Spring* at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; and *Process and Abstraction* at the Cleveland Museum of Art's Transformer Station. Other exhibitions include *Mariah Robertson* at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, UK; *Greater New York* at MoMA/PS1, New York; and *Mariah Robertson: Let's Change* at Grand Arts, Kansas City. Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among others. Mariah Robertson lives and works in Brooklyn, and this is her second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Location:	<b>M+B</b> , 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, California 90069
Show Title:	<i>Mariah Robertson: The Hydra</i>
Exhibition Dates:	January 13 – February 17, 2018
Opening Reception:	Saturday, January 13, 6 – 8 pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm

For press inquiries, please contact [info@mbart.com](mailto:info@mbart.com). For all other inquiries, contact Shannon Richardson at [shannon@mbart.com](mailto:shannon@mbart.com) or Jonlin Wung at [jonlin@mbart.com](mailto:jonlin@mbart.com).



# M+B

artnet®news

## Mariah Robertson's Prismatic Photograms Showcase Her Startling Darkroom Ingenuity

By Tanner West  
January 19, 2018

**What the Artist Says:** “The photograms are made with all the basic components in a darkroom: the enlarger, the table, the timer, some paper, me, and some cardboard. It is the system built for image printing from negatives, for fine control of light. I’m just using the essentialized elements of the light control machine and the human body, a duo made for each other. Moving the cardboard mask, measuring in units of ‘my fingertips,’ then up on the toes to hit the color film base layer dial, I cup my hand around the lens to shape the shaft of light, then down to hit the pedal for an exposure, then up on the toes and crank the Yellow and the Magenta and all over again. I know the number combos that make colors... 30 Y, 130 M, 2 sec, f2.8 makes this lime green, and then my favorites are the grays which happen around 70Y 70M.”



**Why It's Worth a Look:** There's more to this show—including cool mobiles and a display of her male nudes—but the intricacy and technical verve of Robertson's photograms pull you in all by themselves.

# M+B

## Art in America

### *Mariah Robertson*

By Eloise Maxwell  
May 2017



In Mariah Robertson's exhibition, tintypes depicting male nudes, powerful in their understated rawness, accompany vibrantly colored, abstract photograms in precisely shaded white frames. Initially, there seems to be little relation between these two bodies of work. However, performance and collaboration underpin all elements of Robertson's practice, and it is this that ties the tintypes and photograms together. The photograms are produced through choreography in the darkroom, as the artist uses her hands and feet to

control the exposure of the prints. The tintypes she sees as an extended, more conceptually oriented performance, in which she reverses the typical gender dynamics of the nude portrait by subjecting these men to the female gaze. The skills of others are employed in both series, from the framer who produces custom settings for her photographs to the models and crew involved in making the tintypes. The juxtaposition of

these works demonstrates the wide spectrum encompassed within Robertson's practice, as well as her commitment to pushing at the boundaries of what photography can be.





# ARTILLERY

## The Analog Revolution: Shock of the Old

May 3, 2016

By Anise Stevens

The first to grow up in an image-centric world where the mass-dissemination of images via film, print and television started to infiltrate American culture on scales never before seen, those of the Pictures Generation found themselves grappling with notions concerning authenticity and authorship. Immersed within a world where the affluence of representation was starting to reveal its impact upon the collective consciousness, many of these artists began looking to appropriation as a vehicle to analyze their relationships with popular culture and the mass media.

Of particular influence here were Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, whose philosophical writings cultivated a shift in literary discourse. By encouraging the reader to divert his attention from the author's intent and instead impose his experience onto a text's meaning, they fostered a similar shift in art criticism. Many of the "Pictures" artists embraced this tenet by subverting the signifying functions that popular imagery imposed by appropriating recognizable and often iconographic images. In doing so, they didn't just elevate photography as an art form, but ultimately changed the way we look at pictures.

The same can be said about a number of contemporary photographers who are returning to the darkroom and revisiting analog technologies for their capacity to capture the mercurial effects that conspire when material properties interact. "In what could be described as a reaction to all things digital," says LA gallerist Thomas von Lintel, there's been "a steady proliferation of younger artists embracing older photographic processes, such as photograms, cyanotypes, gum prints or tin types, just to name a few."

While the "Pictures" artists inspired a new discourse by undermining old notions about photography, artists today are doing the same by embracing the mistakes and chance happenings that are apt to result from the imprecise science upon which photography was founded.

The lineage of aesthetic influence here dates back to László Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray, who revived the camera-less photogram technique in the 1920s as a means for exploring the expressive properties of light. During Other practitioners whose exploratory approaches are helping to expand photography's lexicon are Marco Breuer, Eileen Quinlan, Mariah Robertson and Alison Rossiter. Along with an appreciation for the unpredictable and often erratic interactions that result from the application of analog technologies, each of these artists aren't only putting the physical nature of image-making at the forefront of their practice, they're asking us to once again re-evaluate the way we read pictures. Unlike digital photography, which now enables total quality-control throughout what has become a highly regulated image-making process, this return to photography's basic physics has brought with it a refreshing exuberance. Accidents and mistakes aren't simply recognized as failures, but instead as original, one-of-a-kind works whose aesthetic value is largely determined by uncompromising external forces. the mid-19th century, the photogram process was revisited again by Floris Neusüss, whose camera-less Körperfotogramms captured life-size silhouettes of nude bodies exposed on photographic paper. Along with Pierre Cordier, who invented the chemigram technique in the 1950s, Neusüss cultivated a new regard for photography and its role as an artistic medium, which practitioners such as Robert Heinecken celebrated by incessantly testing the medium's limitless possibilities.



Mariah Robertson, 35, 2014  
unique chemical treatment on RA-4 paper  
© Mariah Robertson, courtesy M+B Gallery, Los

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When Welling began experimenting with the photogram technique, he found that it fueled his ongoing obsession with light-sensitive materials. His series “Torsos,” (2005–08), for example, features images of cut and crumpled window screenings that he placed on chromogenic paper before exposing to light. The material's capacity for light permeability incited Welling's decision to experiment further. And what he achieved was an evocative miscellany of rich textures, which lend a sculptural quality to the work and highlight the essence of his process.

Working within this same paradigm, Farrah Karapetian and Matthew Brandt also approach photography with an enthusiasm for experimentation. Both studied under Welling, and his influence is apparent throughout their bodies of work.

Karapetian bases much of her work in the physicality of her process. Her most recent series of photograms, “Relief” (2015), invokes the perilous plight of the refugee at sea, which she succinctly captured by illuminating the essence of the instant and its precarious nature by using less conventional materials as conduits for light, such as metal and plastic. Her experiments with ice, in particular, are largely responsible for lending an air of inadvertency to the series due to the transitory nature of this volatile element when placed on photosensitive at the time of exposure.

Brandt too, embraces the physical process of image making. His series “Lakes and Reservoirs” (2013–14) was a steppingstone in his exploration of image-making. By soaking colored photographs of lakes or reservoirs in the actual waters that each print represents, often for days and even weeks at a time, he didn't just expedite a better understanding about the process of natural erosion but has since continued to incorporate the spontaneity of natural phenomena into his photo-making.

Like Welling, Liz Deschenes has done much to advance photography's material potential. Since the early 1990s, she's consistently worked with the medium's fundamental components: paper, light and chemicals. Her photograms embody an ambience reflective of the atmosphere in which each is created. By exposing light-sensitive paper to either sun or moonlight, she creates variegated surfaces that reflect the unpredictability of atmospheric conditions, which are then compounded by the mutable impact of reactive chemicals. The results of her practice render mirror-like, monochromatic studies that don't simply reveal the variant conditions under which each of Deschenes' photograms are subjected, but their reflective quality invokes an immersive element that subtly urges viewers to ponder the nature of representation.

Walead Beshty has equally influenced the way we look at images today by calling attention to the conditions of his practice, which he leaves up to chance by choosing to work in complete darkness. The only conscious interventions he does make in the production of his vibrant and lush photograms involve a few basic logistics. These concern the size and scope of his works. Otherwise, the bulk of Beshty's process involves an almost intuitive process of folding, crumpling and curling large sheets of photographic paper into various sections, which he then exposes to colored light sources while confined within an unlit darkroom.

Other practitioners whose exploratory approaches are helping to expand photography's lexicon are Marco Breuer, Eileen Quinlan, Mariah Robertson and Alison Rossiter. Along with an appreciation for the unpredictable and often erratic interactions that result from the application of analog technologies, each of these artists aren't only putting the physical nature of image-making at the forefront of their practice, they're asking us to once again re-evaluate the way we read pictures. Unlike digital photography, which now enables total quality-control throughout what has become a highly regulated image-making process, this return to photography's basic physics has brought with it a refreshing exuberance. Accidents and mistakes aren't simply recognized as failures, but instead as original, one-of-a-kind works whose aesthetic value is largely determined by uncompromising external forces.



# M+B

## ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

### 8 Incredible Artists on the Rise

Drawing notice from some of the art-world's leading curators and collectors, these 8 remarkable talents are taking off

November 10, 2015

For an artist, there are many paths from unknown to established. Success can happen overnight, sparked by the support of a major patron, or gradually after years of hard-won recognition. No matter the route, these eight talents are squarely in the spotlight, commanding the attention of curators and collectors alike with work that ranges from fresh takes on abstract painting to handmade weavings to daring digital innovations. All are poised for art-world stardom. We'll certainly be watching to see what they do next.

#### Mariah Robertson

Unruly chemical reactions yield enigmatic beauty in the work of this Brooklyn artist, whose photographic process abandons the camera altogether. Dressed in a hazmat suit, she soaks, sprinkles, and sprays photo paper with darkroom developers and fixers, experimenting with different concentrations and temperatures to conjure vivid patterns. For some pieces Robertson will use entire rolls of paper, draping the results from the ceiling like a giant kaleidoscopic ribbon. For others, she'll crudely slice sheets off the reel, preserving the jagged edges. Her spectral creations, each one unique, have been picked up by New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. [mbart.com](http://mbart.com)



Photo: Courtesy of the artist and the  
M+ B Gallery, Los Angeles

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## Artists revive old methods and invent new ones to bring wonder back into photography

By Robert Everett-Green  
April 30, 2015

The earliest photographers were like magicians, who caught images of the material world on blank surfaces without pencil or paint. Georges Méliès, who made some of the first motion pictures, actually started as an illusionist, and used his camera to amaze.

Now, of course, anyone can snap pictures with a cellphone, and add them instantly to a stockpile of online imagery more likely to exhaust than astonish. Even Photoshop's tricks have ceased to amaze, while undermining photography's strongest boast: that it shows the world as it really is.

Some artists have responded by bringing materiality and wonder back into photography. They have returned to messy and sometimes erratic forms of photo-chemistry, reviving old methods or inventing new ones. Their works often don't look like photography as we know it, and don't intend to. Like old-time illusionists, these artists challenge us to figure out how the magic was done.

Mariah Robertson's works at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (MOCCA), for example, have the look of exuberant abstract paintings. Vivid colours swirl over each other in non-repeating patterns, in one case literally pooling in a heap of paper on the floor. But Robertson's colours all come from the reaction of chemical washes to her light-sensitive photographic papers.

Ryan Foerster, also at MOCCA, uses a similar process, sometimes also burying his pictures temporarily or leaving them out in the rain. The idea is to allow natural or accidental transformations to work on a scarred and textured surface that may look more like geology than photography.

Both artists are represented in Part Picture, a group show that is a must-see part of the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival. The exhibition, curated by Brooklyn-based photographer and critic Chris Wiley, also includes some James Welling prints made from photograms – simple camera-less images captured by exposing an object on light-sensitive paper. A similar process was used in the 1850s by botanist Anna Atkins, one of whose images figures in Past Picture: Photography and the Chemistry of Intention, a concurrent MOCCA show of mostly historic photos assembled with the National Gallery of Canada. Welling alludes to Atkins with his choice of subject – plants – but also uses colour filters and digital superimposition to achieve a look that recalls painting or silk-screening. Past Picture also includes abstract photograms by Man Ray and Share Corsaut, a Canadian working with vintage techniques in the 1980s.



Chromogenic print mounted on Dibond aluminum by James Welling.

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Back at Part Picture, Ellen Carey transforms 100 large Polaroid negatives into a monumental textural display called Mourning Wall, which is as grey and mottled as an elephant's hide. The effect was achieved, says Wiley, by pulling the negatives through Polaroid chemical rollers, but that explanation doesn't get you halfway to the intense materiality of this work.

Plenty of other CONTACT artists use antique procedures or mess with their photos in unconventional ways. Curtis Wehrfritz uses a wet collodion process for his works at the Alison Milne Gallery, in which a glass plate is doused in chemicals that remain wet when the image is taken. The results have a soft, streaky look that goes far beyond the retro appeal of digital apps such as Hipstamatic. Rita Leistner actually does use that iPhone app for her show at the Dylan Ellis Gallery, but has the images printed (by Bob Carnie) using a three-colour gum bichromate process similar to that used by Edward Steichen a century ago. It's a clever mash-up of digital technology with a form of printing prized for its resemblance to hand-drawing.

Claire Harvie's photos at Alliance Française's gallery (from May 6) exploit the chemical instability of chromatype, a process from the 1830s in which the finished images continue to darken as more light reaches them. Harvie's theme is the subjectivity of colour perception, which briefly became a social-media meme in February via a photo of a dress that looked white and gold to some, blue and black to others.

Wil Murray, at Katzman Contemporary (from May 2), paints directly on his negatives using photographic oils, of the kind normally used for tinting prints by hand. Randy Grskovic, in the same show and at Gallery 44 (from May 1), makes deliberately rough collages of found negatives, emphasizing his material with lashings of Scotch tape.

Even the Art Gallery of Ontario's ongoing exhibition of photos from the Lodz Ghetto makes a subtle effort to shift the materiality of Henryk Ross's images to the foreground. The modern printing of his photos includes the entire width of the negatives, showing the sprocket perforations and also any damage sustained while the photos were buried in the hole where Ross hid them during the Second World War. In his way, he was anticipating Foerster's interred photo papers, though certainly not for art's sake.



A unique chemical treatment on RA4 paper by Mariah Robertson.

Other artists at CONTACT achieve strange results by building their own cameras or adapting specialized devices. Toni Hafkenscheid uses a camera with an extremely shallow depth of field to take landscape photographs that make freight trains look like toys (in a group show at the Art Gallery of Mississauga). Ralph Nevins works a homemade variation on photo-finish cameras to produce grotesque portraits of bodies that seems as pliable as taffy (at Opticianado). But CONTACT's cheekiest instance of photography by unusual means may be Phil Solomon's Empire X 8, a time-lapse representation of the Empire State Building, not as seen by a camera but as rendered in the video game Grand Theft Auto IV. Apparently, there are still many ways to make interesting works with and around photography.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## MARIAH ROBERTSON Photography Lovers' Peninsula

February 14 – May 2, 2015

**Opening Reception with Performance  
In Collaboration with Robbie McDonald**  
Saturday, February 14, 2015 from 6 to 9 pm

**M+B** is pleased to announce *Photography Lovers' Peninsula*, Mariah Robertson's first solo exhibition with M+B. The exhibition runs from February 14 to May 2, 2015. An opening reception with performance in collaboration with Robbie McDonald will be held on Saturday, February 14 from 6 to 9 pm.

*These works are made with photography chemistry directly applied to photography paper. I once described this work as an extreme end, or peninsula, of material-based photo work. Also, the installation layout looks like the outline of Florida on the floor plan of the gallery.*

*This work stems from some issues with authority and having been told NO about a lot of things that were clearly pointless. This is the emotional engine of a dry, analytic, simple conceptual project of inverting the vernacular binary code of YES/NO in a closed system—in this case, darkroom photography.*

*Some easily summarized examples, both technical and opinion-based:*

*One is not supposed to use glossy paper because it is unsophisticated, bad taste, etc.*

*One cannot touch glossy paper with an ungloved hand because the oil from the finger will render it a damaged, invalid object.*

*One cannot have any dings, creases or dents in the photographic paper ("if you want to be taken seriously").*

*Darkroom materials are made to function only with highly controlled, tiny amounts of light. Chemistry is made to function under tightly controlled temperature conditions.*

*Identifying and inverting various YES or NO points in the operational flow chart led to the following experiments:*

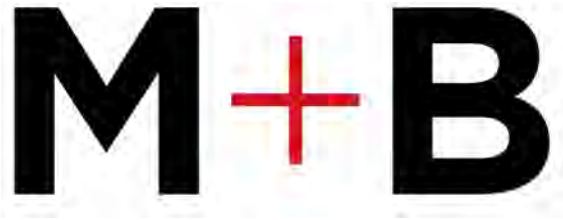
*Cutting a 6x9 foot piece of glossy paper by hand with a box cutter and wadding it up into the darkroom sink and pouring very hot and very cold chemistry onto it with the overhead lights on like in a regular room.*

*There is no image, only a record of what has happened to each piece of paper.*

*Applying a similar decision making process to the framing, so that the framing is irregular and the framed pieces sit on the floor or are stacked floor to ceiling.*

*I look at reference jpegs of these works so often, that when I see them in person, I remember how much detail and physical presence they have. So we are building some special things in the gallery to make the most out of the experience of actually being there.*





**Mariah Robertson** (b. 1975) received her BA from UC Berkeley and her MFA from Yale University. Her work has been exhibited widely at public and private institutions including the exhibitions *What is a Photograph?* at the International Center of Photography, New York, *A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Process and Abstraction* at Transformer Station, Ohio and *Modern Alchemy: Experiments in Photography* at The Heckscher Museum of Art, New York. Other exhibitions include *Mariah Robertson* at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, UK; *Greater New York* at MoMA/PS1, New York (catalogue); *Mariah Robertson: Let's Change* at Grand Arts, Kansas City (booklet) and *Out of Focus* at the Saatchi Gallery, London (catalogue). Robertson recently released a leporello bound, scaled reproduction of a 100 foot photograph that was on view at the ICP with London-based publisher *Self Publish, Be Happy*. Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Robertson is featured in an ongoing documentary for Art 21 titled *New York Close Up*. Mariah Robertson lives and works in Brooklyn.

Location:	<b>M+B</b> , 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, California 90069
Show Title:	Mariah Robertson: Photography Lovers' Peninsula
Exhibition Dates:	February 14 – May 2, 2015
Opening Reception:	Saturday, February 14, 6 – 9pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment

For press inquiries, please contact Jeanie Choi at (310) 550-0050 or [jeanie@mbart.com](mailto:jeanie@mbart.com).

For all other inquiries, contact Shannon Richardson at [shannon@mbart.com](mailto:shannon@mbart.com) or Alexandra Wetzel at [alexandra@mbart.com](mailto:alexandra@mbart.com).

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# M+B

LA WEEKLY®

## Arts / Art Picks

April 10-16, 2015  
By Catherine Wagley

### Arts // Art Picks //

## RAPPERS IN THE MUSEUM

AND ONE OF THE TOP-GROSSING  
LIVING ARTISTS

BY CATHERINE WAGLEY

**T**his week, an actor in East Hollywood has an existential crisis, a photographer in WeHo breaks all the rules, and a mechanical ice bag travels to Japan.

**5. I thought my life would be different**  
"Blurring and Its Opposite" at Agency begins outside on the sidewalk, where Justin Lowman painted a multicolored neon border around the front edges of an otherwise gray electrical box. Similarly colored sand lines the sidewalk cracks leading up to the gallery and continues into the cracks in the gallery's concrete floor. The colored sand ends right before getting to Adrian Paules' concrete blocks and Katie Sinnott's mostly white, geometric alterations to the back wall. But controlled subtlety devolves into crisis in the back, where Lee Sargent, the actor in Jayson

Kellogg's film *This Is Me*, questions everything ("I thought my life would be different," he says, repeatedly). 4911 Clinton St., East Hollywood; through April 18. (818) 415-7619, [agencycontemporaryart.com](http://agencycontemporaryart.com).

#### 4. Famous photo defacer

German painter Gerhard Richter has combined abstraction and photo-realism since the 1960s, before he was one of the world's highest-grossing living artists. Back then, his B&W paintings of newspaper photos often would blur into oblivion. Sometime in the 1990s, Richter started painting with thick oil over colored photos. These painted photos, a number of which are on view Hannah Hoffman, tend to be small—the biggest is 5x7 inches. They're also funny and casual, like offhand experiments by someone who has bigger things on his mind. In one, a stroke of orange over a suited man's face looks like a ceremonial headdress. 1010 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood; through April 18. (323) 450-9106, [hannahhoffmangallery.com](http://hannahhoffmangallery.com).

#### 3. Bleacher seats

Mariah Robertson installed tasteful wood bleachers in M+B's concrete-floored gallery. This way, visitors to her exhibi-

tion "Photography Lovers' Peninsula" can feel comfortable staying a while, looking at the dramatic photographic experiments she makes by spilling or mixing photo chemicals, overexposing her glossy paper and tearing the work. Despite Robertson's irreverence, or because of it, many of her framed pictures really do look like "Art," wildly abstract in the way an especially vibrant neo-expres-

Mariah Robertson's  
"Photography Lovers'  
Peninsula" show at M+B



PHOTO BY JEFF MCLANE FOR M+B

sionist painting might be. 612 N. Almont Drive, West Hollywood; through May 2. (310) 550-0050, [mbart.com](http://mbart.com).

#### 2. Biggie and Tupac at MoMA

In 2012, New York-based artist Kevin Beasley, barefooted and wearing a black cap and white button-up shirt, sat on the floor of the Museum of Modern Art's atrium surrounded by gear. He live-mixed a cappella tracks by dead rappers — Big-

gie Smalls, Tupac — slowing them down, distorting them. He did this while a line of people nearby waited to see Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. The loudness and violence of the music understandably angered some; the museum received one letter saying Beasley should never be allowed in the building again. The artist will be at Art + Practice in Leimert Park, talking about his work. 4339 Leimert Blvd., Leimert Park; Saturday, April 11, 3-4:30 pm. (323) 337-6887, [artandpractice.org](http://artandpractice.org).

#### 1. Car money and culture clash

Two weeks ago, LACMA announced that Korean car company Hyundai would be giving tens of millions to the museum, enough to help fund a number of projects, including the Art + Technology Lab that LACMA launched last year. The new program, which helps artists realize tech-involved projects, is based on an old one, launched by LACMA's first modern-art curator, Maurice Tuchman, in the late 1960s. That project, meant to pair artists with high-tech corporations to produce innovative work, was like a culture clash. Corporations and artists, it turned out, had quite different values, and a number of projects imploded as a result. The exhibition up now in a small room on the second floor of the Ahmanson Building documents some of the implosions and the successes, such as Claes Oldenburg's gigantic mechanical ice pack. Museums have become exponentially better at navigating corporate culture in the decades since. 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; through Oct. 18. (323) 857-6000, [lacma.org](http://lacma.org).



# Los Angeles Times

## Critic's Choice

### **Mariah Robertson's vigorous tussle with photography**

By Leah Ollman  
March 12, 2015



"Photography Lovers' Peninsula," installation at M+B by Mariah Robertson  
(Jeff McLane, M+B Gallery, Los Angeles)

Mariah Robertson is one of photography's exciting new essentialists. She pares down the medium to a few of its most basic ingredients: light, chemicals and a light-sensitive surface.

Nevermind a lens. Nevermind a subject plucked from the visible world. Hers is an untamed art, stomach-flipping in its wild energy and jolts of rapturous beauty.

Robertson titles her formidable show at M+B "Photography Lovers' Peninsula," after her sense of herself working at the "extreme end, or peninsula, of material-based photo work."

Also, her 15 huge prints (up to 10 feet tall) are installed like a jagged peninsula projecting into the gallery space, the frames edge-to-edge and starting at floor level, forming a continuous architectural wall.

The vocabulary among images is continuous as well. Each sheet bursts and bleeds with saturated color. Veins of heart-stopping violet, quenching cyan, fiery orange, lush crimson and queasy greenish-yellow drip down, up and across the pages. Smears run and veils hang in all directions, layered with splatter, speckle and grain.

Each work is the residue of Robertson's vigorous tussle with her materials, the pouring of chemicals and improvised manipulation of their flow. She is photography's answer to stain painting, action painting and process-based performance: Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis, Jackson Pollock, and hot-lead-throwing Richard Serra, all rolled into one.

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Her work is equal parts assertion and denial, an irrefutable proclamation of presence born of resistance and defiance. The press release for the show, written by the Brooklyn-based artist, reads like a manifesto, or rather an anti-manifesto, a challenge to photography's standing principles regarding pristine, controlled darkroom procedures. She embraces the crease and the wrinkle. She courts accident. She works with the lights on.

Robertson's previous works have been more overtly sculptural: wide rolls of photo paper (dense with spontaneous color and markings) rippling across the floor or suspended from above, looped and unspooling.

Even though the pieces at M+B are discrete, and individually framed, the installation reads most powerfully as a whole. She has even provided bleachers to better view the works from a bit of distance, as a dynamic performance of motion, shifts, adjacencies -- as an aesthetic-athletic event.

Up close, we can more easily discern the torn, irregular edges, the flayed sections of emulsion. Standing near, the washes and skeins of intense color verge on immersive. The push/pull motion of the surface plays itself out without reprieve, and the decibel level never drops.

When the shock value of Robertson's work eventually does exhaust itself, the deliquescent details help pick up the slack. Piece by piece, and as a whole, this work seethes.

*M+B, 612 N. Almont Drive, (310) 550-0050, through April 8. Closed Sunday and Monday. [www.mbart.com](http://www.mbart.com)*



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## ARTSCENE™

### Mariah Robertson: "Photography Lovers' Peninsula" at M+B

March 2015

By Michael Shaw

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ArtScene



Marian Robertson, installation view of "The Photography Lovers' Peninsula," 2015, is currently on view at M+B Art.

**Mariah Robertson's** installation of large-scale, chemically-treated photo abstractions pushes the boundaries and context of photography from seemingly every direction. "The Photography Lovers' Peninsula" of the show's title is composed of 14 framed, chemically expressionistic pieces of exposed RA-4 photo paper

— horizontals and verticals, the longest of which reaches up to over 11 feet — that wrap around the midpoint of the two galleries, complete with three-row, squared, bleacher-style benches on the walls of each space, implicitly for viewing. Robertson has carved a substantial niche within contemporary photography, and art, by extending her exposed photo-paper experiments into such formats as spiraling rolls that stand upright, and more over-the-top configurations that cascade from ceiling to floor and back up again. Though each piece here, on its own, potentially affords equitable levels of quasi-aesthetic engagement, with hottish pinks as well as cyans featured most prominently, their condensed collective cacophony, butting up against and on top of each other, pushes the experience of the work away from the visually contemplative and toward the ideas, which stem from rejections of prim photographic traditions. In that light, the show's title underlines yet another rejection of expectations in the photograph-to-viewer dynamic, as if to say, "Take that, tight-ass photo purists!" (M+B Art, West Hollywood)

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## ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

### MARIAH ROBERTSON'S BOLD PHOTOGRAPHIC INSTALLATIONS GO ON DISPLAY

February 18, 2015  
By Michael Slenske

On Valentine's Day, there were plenty of couples circulating the West Hollywood space of M+B Gallery for the carnivalesque opening of Mariah Robertson's "Photography Lovers' Peninsula" exhibition. To welcome them into her world of photographic revelry, the Brooklyn-based artist enlisted a bearded gentleman to pump keg beer in the nude, a Grim Reaper to dole out chocolate roses, and a mariachi band to serenade the crowd while an In-N-Out food truck stuffed them with Double-Doubles. The bacchanalian excess was only appropriate given the riot of colors jumping off Robertson's architectural photo installation inside.

Robertson invented her signature process almost four years ago, when she ruined a 40-inch-wide roll of Kodak metallic film paper in her Greenpoint studio. Rather than toss it, she decided to throw developer liquids in a variety of combinations and temperatures on the roll, and to her surprise the reactions teased out a series of chemical abstractions that resembled everything from Kool-Aid swirling in a fish tank to bleachy solar flares and bubbled graffiti gradients.



343, 2014, Mariah Robertson

In the ensuing years Robertson has added to the visual chaos by crumpling the sheets of film paper and showing works in rolls hanging from ceilings (in locations such as MoMA and Wesleyan University). She's also been cutting her works off the roll, leaving them with jagged edges. "They just get very banged up in the process," says Robertson, whose techniques are a response to the cultural edicts of photography that warn against using glossy paper, damaging the paper, or using darkroom chemicals in uncontrolled light and temperature conditions. "The project for me is in the making of the images and in exploring the materials, but slowly I get technically better."

That means Robertson can now create hot-pink propulsions via ketchup squeeze bottles or bright blue alluvial fans via hot water poured directly from the kettle. She even employs veterinary syringes and jugs of bleach to inject milky rivulets or spread white voids across the paper.

Culled from hundreds of works, the images at M+B conjure everything from Day-Glo Venus flytraps to Gerhard Richter squeegees. Ranging in height from six to 12 feet, the pieces are hung tightly along angled walls installed just for the show, with works grouped by colors so viewers can see the artist's tonal progressions. Robertson even has two sets of wood bleachers so guests can linger with the primordial psychedelia of her painterly compositions.

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"I love these white halos," says Robertson, pointing to a six-foot-wide piece with the bottom sheared off at a 30-degree angle and volcanic bursts of gold spilling over aquatic fields of black and blue. "I'd love to be able to do these at will, but to really have full control would just feel boxed in."

If the high jinks at the opening—which she devised partially in secret from her gallerists—were any indication, Robertson should have no trouble finding and thriving on chaos for years to come.

Through March 21 at M+B Gallery, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles; [mbart.com](http://mbart.com)



254, 2014, Mariah Robertson  
365, 2014, Mariah Robertson  
232, 2014, Mariah Robertson



## PARIS PHOTO LOS ANGELES 2014

### Mariah Robertson

New York Backlot / Stand G3  
April 25 – 27, 2014



For Paris Photo Los Angeles 2014, Mariah Robertson will exhibit two concurrently produced bodies of work that continue her investigation into the indexical parameters of photography and its potential for performativity and abstraction. Lush and ethereally monolithic works will about a series of photograms that contrast geometric forms with soft, obscure abstractions.

*A box of photo paper in my darkroom got 'blown,' that is, opened in a fully lit room. Photography is all about the control of tiny amounts of light in tiny fractions of time, so that was a pretty gut wrenching, oh no, moment. Rather than throw away a few hundred feet of paper, I kept it for experiments. Having the lights on meant that I could finally use all of the 72 inch paper I had but couldn't get my arms around in the full darkness that you need for color processing. Theoretically they should have been either black or bleached white, but with different dilutions and temperature chemistry combinations they started to turn out like crazy, giant abstract paintings with some strange material presence. It's a roll of the dice, all in one go process, which is hard to fully control. I find the emotional effect of*

*their presence bypasses reason and intellectual functions in an unsettling manner. Confusion on this topic of feelings led me back to a box of abstract photograms I made in 2000-2003 with colored gels and geometric masks. There was one that I hated at the time that ten years later turned out to be really special in a way the others weren't. I figured the best way to try to understand this was to make some more. They were made in 'other people's darkrooms' and are very crisp and geometric. The ones that are special have a back and forth of order and chaos.*

– Mariah Robertson

Mariah Robertson was born in 1975 and grew up in California. She received her BA from UC Berkeley in 1997 and her MFA from Yale University in 2005. Her work has been exhibited widely at public and private institutions including the current exhibitions *What is a Photograph?* at the International Center of Photography, New York and *A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Other exhibitions include *Mariah Robertson* at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, UK; *Greater New York* at MoMA/PS1, New York (catalogue); *Mariah Robertson: Let's Change* at Grand Arts, Kansas City (booklet) and *Out of Focus* at the Saatchi Gallery, London (catalogue). Robertson recently released a leporello bound, scaled reproduction of a 100 foot photograph (currently on view at the ICP) with London-based publisher *Self Publish, Be Happy*. Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and featured in an ongoing documentary for Art 21 titled *New York Close Up*. Mariah Robertson lives and works in Brooklyn.



## **A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio**

February 8–October 5, 2014

The Edward Steichen Photography Galleries, third floor

*A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio* examines the ways in which photographers and other artists using photography have worked and experimented within their studios, from photography's inception to the present. Featuring both new acquisitions and works from the Museum's collection that have not been on view in recent years, *A World of Its Own* brings together photographs, films, and videos by artists such as Berenice Abbott, Uta Barth, Zeke Berman, Karl Blossfeldt, Constantin Brancusi, Geta Brătescu, Harry Callahan, Robert Frank, Jan Groover, Barbara Kasten, Man Ray, Bruce Nauman, Paul Outerbridge, Irving Penn, Adrian Piper, Edward Steichen, William Wegman, and Edward Weston.

Depending on the period, the cultural or political context, and the commercial, artistic, or scientific motivations of the artist, the studio might be a haven, a stage, a laboratory, or a playground. For more than a century, photographers have dealt with the spaces of their studios in strikingly diverse and inventive ways: from using composed theatrical tableaux (in photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron or Cindy Sherman) to putting their subjects against neutral backdrops (Richard Avedon, Robert Mapplethorpe); from the construction of architectural sets within the studio (Francis Bruguière, Thomas Demand) to chemical procedures conducted within the darkroom (Walead Beshty, Christian Marclay); and from precise recordings of motion (Eadweard Muybridge, Harold Edgerton) to playful, amateurish experimentation (Roman Signer, Peter Fischli and David Weiss). *A World of Its Own* offers another history of photography—a photography created within the walls of the studio, and yet as innovative as its more extroverted counterpart, street photography.

The exhibition is organized by Quentin Bajac, The Joel and Anne Ehrenkranz Chief Curator, with Lucy Gallun, Assistant Curator, Department of Photography.

# M+B

## BLOUINARTINFO

### 5 Artists to Watch at Paris Photo LA's Solo Booths

April 25, 2014

By Alanna Martinez

After the rousing success of last year's inaugural Los Angeles edition of Paris Photo, the programming for its second year, opening April 25, is more ambitious, expansive, and exciting than ever — especially its solo section. Held once again at Paramount Pictures Studios and backlot, the fair boasts some 70 exhibiting galleries from 18 countries, and 31 solo shows featuring both emerging and established artists.

The fair's selection committee organized the solo section's refined grouping of booths, which includes work from newcomers like Abigail Reynolds, Brian Bress, and Christina De Middel, along with recognizable figures like Stephen Shore, Edward Burtynsky, and William Eggleston.

Julien Frydman, the fair's director, explained how the unique Hollywood setting for Paris Photo was complimentary to some artists' work, and a source of inspiration for others. "Some artists certainly do visit the space in advance and have a vision of how the work should be presented," he said.

"Some exhibitors are presenting very unique installations where the space is an integral part of the presentation, such as Cherry and Martin's stand in the New York Street backlot, or M+B and François Ghebaly. One of the interesting qualities of the backlot is actually seeing interesting qualities of the backlot is actually seeing how exhibitors and artists work not only within, but with each of these unique spaces."

With some artists looking to incorporate the filmic location into their presentations, and others premiering imagery from worlds away, here are five artists to look out for while exploring the fair's single artist exhibitions.

#### Uta Barth

The formally impressive and aesthetically delicate work of Uta Barth, a Los Angeles-based German artist, will be presented by 1301PE Gallery. Her highly technical process captures the after images of objects, limbs, and movement, creating alluring textures and volume within the frame.

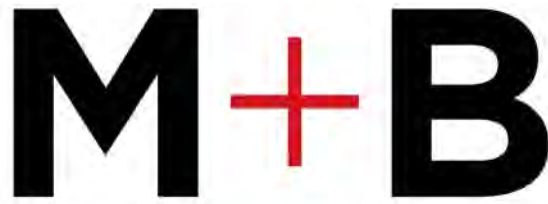
#### Brian Bress

The show runner for Cherry and Martin's booth, Bress created one of the more site appropriate exhibitions. His photography and film work continually bleed between mediums, defying categorization and testing the limits for an otherwise straight and traditionally clean art form. The gallery released a statement noting, "Brian Bress engages the idea of artifice within the context of the ultimate artifice: Paramount Studios's New York backlot." It added, "Illusionistic, collaged scenic backdrops set the stage for Bress's new time-based monitor works and photographs."



Mariah Robertson  
42, 2013

Unique chemical treatment on RA-4 paper  
M+B Gallery, Los Angeles



### **Abigail Reynolds**

The works on Reynolds's website, and presented by Ambach and Rice at the fair, are divided between collage, sculpture, and performance — so why is she front and center at a photo fair? The Londoner's use of appropriated photographic imagery from old books cut and overlaid atop each other produce architectural re-imaginings of iconic buildings and cityscapes. Reynolds connects images through time and space, repositioning them with prominent seams in composite works.

### **Mariah Robertson**

Robertson's work was recently included in the International Center of Photography's much talked about "What is a Photograph?" exhibition, and appropriately so; her arresting numbered works are explosions of color and light, and they scientifically delve into the art form. Her work, an "investigation into the indexical parameters of photography," according to Frydman, will be shown by M+B Gallery — it's not to be missed.

### **Stephen Shore**

Last but not least, the venerable master photographer will be showcasing his most recent body of work, "Winslow, Arizona," with 303 Gallery. The big skies, desert dust, and relics of a past era were completed as part of Doug Aitken's "Station to Station" project. In the series, Shore marries the contemporary with vintage and the inhabited with the desolate, capturing a part of America still very much alive.

Contact: Communications Team  
212.857.0045 info@icp.org

media release



Mariah Robertson. *154* [detail]. 2010. Courtesy collection Dan and Barbara Newman.  
© Mariah Robertson, courtesy American Contemporary, New York

## What Is a Photograph?

On view from  
January 31, 2014  
through  
May 4, 2014

Media Preview  
January 30, 2014  
11:30am-1:30pm

RSVP:  
info@icp.org  
212.857.0045

On view at the International Center of Photography from January 31 through May 4, 2014, *What Is a Photograph?* explores the range of creative experimentation that has occurred in photography since the 1970s.

This major exhibition brings together 21 emerging and established artists who have reconsidered and reinvented the role of light, color, composition, materiality, and the subject in the art of photography. In the process, they have also confronted an unexpected revolution in the medium with the rise of digital technology, which has resulted in imaginative reexaminations of the art of analog photography, the new world of digital images, and the hybrid creations of both systems as they come together.

“Artists around the globe have been experimenting with and redrawing the boundaries of traditional photography for decades,” said ICP Curator Carol Squiers, who organized the exhibit. “Although digital photography seems to have made analog obsolete, artists continue to make works that are photographic objects, using both old technologies and new, crisscrossing boundaries and blending techniques.”

Among those included in the exhibition is Lucas Samaras, who adopted the newly developed Polaroid camera in the late 1960s and early 1970s and immediately began altering its instant prints, creating fantastical nude self-portraits. Another artist who turned to photography in the 1970s was Sigmar Polke. Although better known as a painter, Polke explored nontraditional ways of photographing and printing, manipulating both his film and prints in the darkroom and often drawing and painting on his images.

(more)



More recently, Liz Deschenes has used camera-less photography in a subtle investigation of nonrepresentational forms of expression and the outmoded technologies of photography. And, James Welling has created a heterogeneous body of work that explores optics, human perception, and a range of photographic genres both abstract and representational.

## COMPLETE LIST OF EXHIBITION ARTISTS

**Matthew Brandt** b. 1982, Los Angeles; lives and works in Los Angeles.  
**Marco Breuer** b. 1966, Landshut, Germany; lives and works in New York State.  
**Liz Deschenes** b. 1966, Boston; lives and works in New York City.  
**Adam Fuss** b. 1961, London; lives and works in New York City.  
**Owen Kydd** b. 1975, Calgary, Canada; lives and works in Los Angeles.  
**Floris Neusüss** b. 1937, Lennep, Germany; lives and works in Kassel, Germany.  
**Marlo Pascual** b. 1972, Nashville; lives and works in Brooklyn.  
**Sigmar Polke** 1941–2010; Germany.  
**Eileen Quinlan** b. 1972, Boston; lives and works in New York City.  
**Jon Rafman** b. 1981, Montreal; lives and works in Montreal.  
**Gerhard Richter** b. 1932, Dresden; lives and works in Cologne.  
**Mariah Robertson** b. 1975, Indianapolis; lives and works in Brooklyn.  
**Alison Rossiter** b. 1953, Jackson, Mississippi; lives and works in the metro New York area.  
**Lucas Samaras** b. 1936, Macedonia, Greece; lives and works in New York City.  
**David Benjamin Sherry** b. 1981, Woodstock, New York; lives and works in Los Angeles.  
**Travess Smalley** b. 1986, Huntington, West Virginia; lives and works in New York City.  
**Kate Steciw** b. 1978, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; lives and works in Brooklyn.  
**Artie Vierkant** b. 1986, Breinerd, Minnesota; lives and works in New York City.  
**James Welling** b. 1951, Hartford, Connecticut; lives and works in Los Angeles.  
**Christopher Williams** b. 1956, Los Angeles; lives and works in Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Amsterdam.  
**Letha Wilson** b. 1976, Honolulu; lives and works in Brooklyn.

## CATALOGUE

The show will be accompanied by a full-color catalogue published by DelMonico Books • Prestel with essays by Carol Squiers, Geoffrey Batchen, Hito Steyerl, and George Baker.

*What Is a Photograph?* (ICP/ DelMonico Books • Prestel, 2014)

224 pages + 200 illustrations

9 1/4 x 11 inches

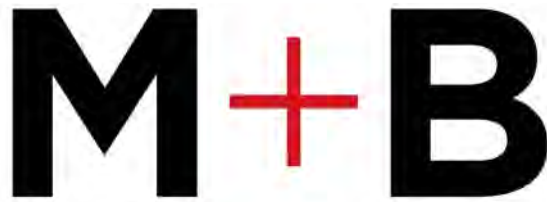
Hardcover; US \$49.95

Publication date: January 2014

*What Is a Photograph?* is generously supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, Deborah Jerome and Peter Guggenheimer, the ICP Exhibitions Committee, and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



(more)



## ARTFORUM

### **“What Is a Photograph?”**

ICP - INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Avenue of the Americas

January 31–May 1

March 1, 2014

By Gabriel H. Sanchez

Many of the artists in this expansive exhibition place an emphasis on the physicality—or lack thereof—of photography rather than on its capacity to represent the outside world. As a whole, “What Is a Photograph?” might be taken as a diagnostic inquiry, with the title reading as a rhetorical question. Curated by Carol Squiers, the exhibition includes twenty-one artists, ranging from Gerhard Richter and James Welling to Liz Deschenes and Eileen Quinlan, and has tasked itself with surveying the medium since the 1970s.

The work of both Matthew Brandt and Letha Wilson exhume a long-standing tradition of American landscape photography with fresh invigoration. In Brandt’s large-scale *Grays Lake, ID 7, 2013*, Technicolor abstractions stem from an actual processing bath in the depicted lake waters, while Wilson’s monolith *Grand Tetons Concrete Column, 2012*, employs industrial concrete to sculpturally engage her iconic views of the American West. Draped through the gallery’s foyer is Mariah Robertson’s *154, 2010*. This single photograph measures one hundred feet in length and has been meticulously hand-processed by the artist in a highly toxic photochemical environment. The remarkable result validates its production, as every inch of this dangling photograph reveals a labyrinth of glowing hues and pictorial intricacies.

Parallel to romanticizing the darkroom are the several artists who wholeheartedly embrace the more conventional, digitalized avenues associated with the medium. Travess Smalley’s *Capture Physical Presence #15, 2011*, exploits the imaging systems of a flatbed scanner to manipulate his collages into what he describes as mind-numbing “feedback loops.” Kate Steciw’s approach in *Apply, 2012*, takes advantage of a Google-based research method, purchased stock imagery, and sculptural tack-ons that recall the slick advertisements of commercial photography. Elsewhere in the gallery, a wall text accompanying Jon Rafman’s eerie and unadorned busts reads, “The age demanded an image / Of its accelerated grimace, Something for the modern stage / Not, at any rate, an attic grace.”

# American Contemporary

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**Mariah Robertson**

**October 31 to December 20, 2013  
Opening October 31, 6-8pm**

**Permanent Puberty**

**Wednesday - Sunday 12 - 6pm  
4 E. 2 Street New York NY 10003**

A philosophical discourse via photographic materials and visual language.

A box of photo paper in my darkroom got 'blown', that is, opened in a fully lit room. Photography is all about the control of tiny amounts of light in tiny fractions of time, so that was a pretty gut wrenching, oh no, moment. Rather than throw away a few hundred feet of paper, I kept it for experiments. Having the lights on meant that I could finally use all of the 72" paper I had but couldn't get my arms around in the full darkness that you need for color processing. Theoretically they should have been either black or bleached white, but with different dilutions and temperature chemistry combinations they started to turn out like crazy, giant abstract paintings with some strange material presence. It's a roll of the dice, all in one go process, which is hard to fully control. I find the emotional effect of their presence bypasses reason and intellectual functions in an unsettling manner. The front room has two sets of these monsters stacked in pairs on top of each other, in separate frames, so they stretch floor to ceiling, within the room.

Confusion on this topic of feelings led me back to a box of abstract photograms I made in 2000-2003 with colored gels and geometric masks. There was one that I hated at the time that ten years later turned out to be really special in a way the others weren't. I figured the best way to try to understand this was to make some more. These are the works in the back room. They were made in 'other people's darkrooms,' and are very crisp and geometric. The ones that are special have a back and forth of order and chaos. I think sometimes this is how most things are in life.

Also in the back room is a drawing about feelings.

Mariah Robertson was born in 1975 and grew up in California. She lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She has exhibited widely at public and private institutions including the current exhibition XL/19 Acquisitions at the Museum of Modern Art; Mariah Robertson, The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, UK; Greater New York, MoMA/PS1, NY (catalogue); Mariah Robertson, Grand Arts, MO (booklet) and Out of Focus at The Saatchi Gallery, London (catalogue). Robertson has just released a leporello bound, scaled reproduction of one of her 100ft photographs with London based publisher 'Self Publish be Happy.' Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, NY and the LA County Museum of Art, CA and featured in an ongoing documentary for Art21 titled New York Close Up.

# M+B

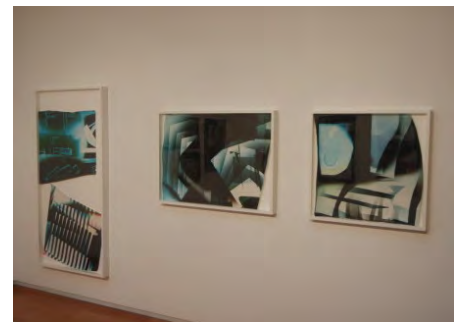
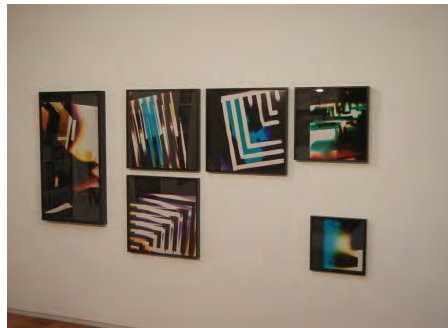
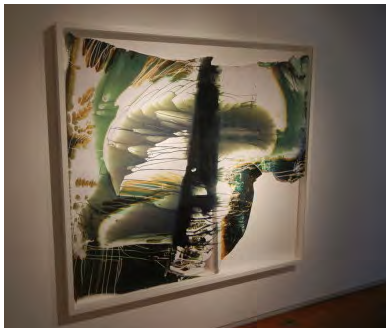
COLLECTOR  
DAILY

## Mariah Robertson, Permanent Puberty @American Contemporary

November 8, 2013

By Loring Knoblauch

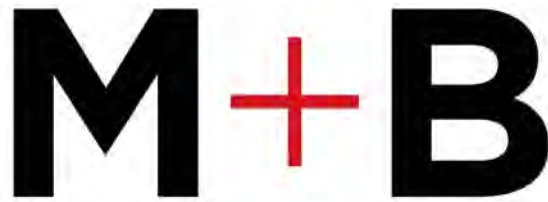
**JTF (just the facts):** A total of 20 photographic works, 5 drawings, and 2 artist's books, variously framed and matted and displayed against white walls in the two room gallery space. The five large works in the front room are all unique chemical treatments on RA-4 paper, made in 2013; they range in size from roughly 58×68 to 72×72. The 15 smaller works in the back room are unique color prints, made in 2013; they range in size from roughly 15×15 to 66×25 (or reverse). The 5 drawings are all ink/graphite on paper, made between 2011 and 2013, with sizes between 18×15 and 35×43. (Installation shots below.)



**Comments/Context:** Mariah Robertson's new show finds her exploring the limits of control in her darkroom practice, pairing a series of large improvisational works with smaller, tighter exercises in crisp geometries. Gone are the recognizable images and silhouettes that inhabited many of her previous works, replaced with varying experimental forms of all-over abstraction, creating a lively back and forth dialogue between chance and intention.

The muscular works in the front room began with an inadvertent opening of a box of paper and a subsequent resolution to probe the edges of a throw away situation. Robertson took these exposed sheets and doused them with developer, bleach, and other chemicals of varying temperatures and consistencies, creating expressionistic, unabashedly painterly layers of fluid gestures. Energetic drips, splashes, and washes cover the paper in mixed up motions, the edges sliced into irregular shapes. A series of sweeping striped pours recalls Morris Louis, while other works tussle and jostle with more chaotic abandon, settling into motifs reminiscent of waterfalls or fish scales.





A step into the next room is a pull back towards order. Rigid rectilinear patterns like piano keys step across the surface of the works, alternately tinted by uneven colored gels. Successive generations of these ideas bring in stuttering angles, boxes, and squares, overlapped like shadowy ripples in a pond and left to linger in hazy, glowing blurs of competing color. The watery gestures of the previous works have been transformed into ghostly edges of movement, repetition building up into dense figure/ground compositional complexity.

I've been a fan of Robertson's work since I first encountered it a few years ago, and while her risk taking produces its share of works that don't quite coalesce, there are far more hits than misses in this show than one might expect. While she is by no means the first to explore photograms and darkroom processes, there is something altogether fresh and vital about her results. She's playing with scale and color, setting hard edge and loose gesture against one another, and incorporating new visual elements into her approach. Those that haven't yet discovered her work need to start paying attention.

**Collector's POV:** The photographic works in this show are priced as follows: the large prints in the front room are \$20000 each, while the smaller works in the back range from \$3000 to \$10000 each (based on size). Robertson's work has little secondary market history, so gallery retail remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up. One of Robertson's large scroll works is currently on view in the XL: 19 New Acquisitions in Photography show at MoMA.

# M+B

## Interview

### MARIAH ROBERTSON'S UNPLANNING

October 31, 2013  
By Rachel Small

Mariah Robertson can't predict the way her photographic-art experiments will turn out. "It follows a thread of accident and chance," she says. It's hard not to wonder how the sizzled, runny mixes of colors, floating objects, and strange, obscured scenes that appear in her work came to be. And it's harder to look away.

To understand her art—or, understand why you do not understand it—it's important to realize that Robertson is not a typical photographer. She spends most of her time in the darkroom, where for years she's taught herself how to manipulate basic tools of photography, like chemical treatments and photo paper, blurring the lines of the medium. Recently, she concocted a 100-foot long photograph called 11 (2012), comprising superimposed negatives and dripping colors. The piece hangs in the MoMA, unfurling over walls and ceilings.

Her latest efforts will be on view at "Permanent Puberty: Part 1," opening today at New York's American Contemporary. The show is a diverse one. Five psychedelic chemically-rendered paintings are the results of particularly dauntless experiments. "I set out the plan... I don't actually know what's going on," she explains.

Robertson at first used only developer and bleach, getting simple blacks and whites, but she soon escalated to tweaking temperatures, the liquids' densities, and finally "throwing hot chemistry at this certain angle" to achieve an intended effect, be it bright blues, rainbows, "tiny triangles all over the place," or "Pac-Man ghost shapes" (results Robertson describes she has down to a science, almost).

The exhibition also presents a series of formal prints Robertson made as a darkroom intern in the early 2000s, uncovered and reworked this summer. ("I can never throw anything away again!") With that, there are two photography books, drawings, and a sort of self-portrait video starring her, her superego, and her id, featuring a scene in which a psychotic id covered in menstrual blood attempts to phone Klaus Biesenbach.



# M+B



Mariah Robertson  
42  
2013  
Unique chemical treatment on RA-4 paper  
72 x 72 inches



Mariah Robertson  
11  
2013  
Unique chemical treatment on RA-4 paper  
72 x 72 inches

Born in 1975 and raised in California, Robertson started out doing performance art—"social experiments," she says—and decided to learn photography to document them. She went on to get her MFA at Yale, where she concentrated on sculpture—though grad school, it turns out, wasn't quite right for her. "I hid my photography practice from everyone. It was private...And therefore untainted by the enormous endless drama psycho B.S. happening in grad school," she half-jokes. She moved to New York after graduating in 2005, turning her focus back to photography and all its possibilities.

"I [like] the unexpected parts, the parts that go beyond what I could have planned," she offers. "Because the plans are kind of pedestrian. Planning happens in the frontal lobe, where you deal with logic and numbers. It's very effective for getting things done. But if you execute something perfectly, you get something pretty boring."

What does it all mean? "There's no answer. It's just... I'm going on."

*"PERMANENT PUBERTY: PART 1" IS ON DISPLAY AT AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY FROM OCTOBER 31 THROUGH DECEMBER 20.*

# M+B

HUFF  
POST ARTS

February 23, 2012

## Mariah Robertson "Let's Change"



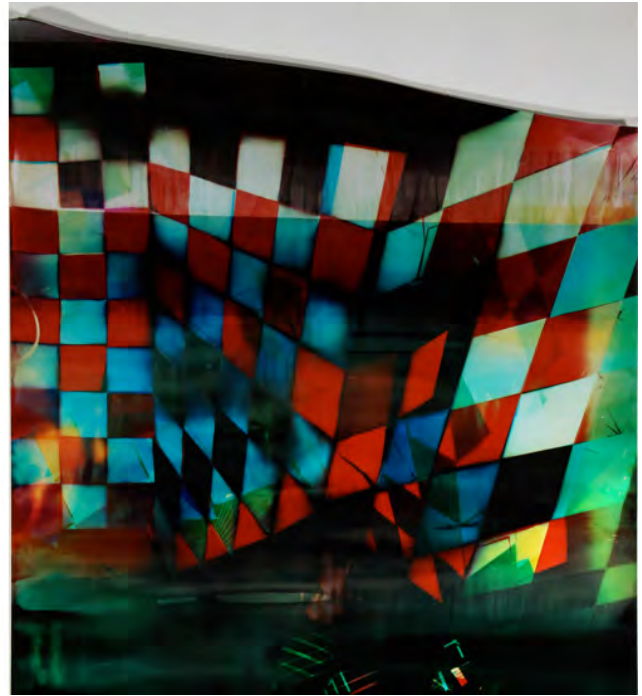
Mariah Robertson is an unrepentant analog photographer. Like her predecessors, she spent countless hours in a darkroom, experimenting with chemicals and filters, enlarging images, and exposing the paper to light in various ways in order to develop the perfect image. But her new exhibit at Grand Arts goes beyond traditional practices, showing how photographs can become sculptures.

Robertson made three 100-foot photographs, twisting and rolling them as she worked, which created moments of experimental spontaneity in an otherwise controlled process. The themes are "male nudes, palm trees, and color abstractions," and along with these pieces, a few framed photos stabilize the space as the waves of prints crash through the gallery.

Mariah Robertson "Let's Change" January 20 – April 7, 2012 at Grand Arts in Kansas City, MO.



Grand Arts presents new work by  
**Mariah Robertson**  
***LET'S CHANGE***



Photos courtesy the artist. Left: Installation view at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, 2011. Right: 86B, c-print, 2010.

**January 20 – April 7, 2012**

**Opening Reception: Friday, January 20th from 6-9PM at Grand Arts. Join us on Saturday, January 21th at 2:00PM for a gallery talk with the artist.**

**All events are free and open to the public.**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**December 1, 2011**

Grand Arts is pleased to announce *Let's Change*, a new installation by Brooklyn-based artist **Mariah Robertson**. This solo exhibition opens on Friday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012 with an opening reception from 6-9PM. The exhibition will remain on view through April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

Working primarily as a photographer, Robertson's work explores analog photographic processes in non-traditional ways. In an age dominated by the immediate pleasures of digital imaging, Robertson's work manages to forge uniquely contemporary works through reimagining the darkroom as studio, laboratory, and playground. As sophisticated digital imaging technologies continue to further separate photography from its documentarian roots, Robertson creates a frisson through foregoing traditional modes of photographic representation in favor of a playful, painterly treatment of images and analog darkroom practices.

**“The work attempts to move photography away from an idea of it as a conduit through which images are channeled, towards an idea of photography as a medium whose specific properties can be tinkered with, stretched and placed into dialogue with those of other media.”**

Wiley, Chris. “Depth of Focus.” Frieze October 2011

*Let's Change* comprises a medley of image/objects united by their florid hues and “punctuated by the occasional intrusion of photographic representation.”<sup>1</sup> Rolls of lustrous photo paper race the length of the gallery's ceiling, cascading down to a gentle spiral at its end. A 100' long continuous roll of photo paper sits on the ground as though it were a barrel. Large and luminous photographs combine colorful abstraction with representational visual themes; palm trees, male nudes, domestic scenery and so on. Irregularly hewn photos rest un-matted in white frames, decidedly ignoring the tropes of photographic presentation. Temporary walls are built to re-orient movement through the gallery, in effect recasting the space itself as a frame for the luscious and ebullient darkroom experiments Robertson presents. In contrast to the representational conventions of photography, Robertson's *Let's Change* flips the script- the world is not mirrored by that which is framed, but the frame itself becomes a new world.

<sup>1</sup>Wiley, Chris. “Depth of Focus.” Frieze October 2011

#### **ARTIST BIO**

Mariah Robertson's work has been shown both throughout the United States and internationally. Robertson has exhibited her work at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, UK, *Greater New York* at MoMA PS1 in New York City, and *Process(ing)* at Galerie Perrotin in Paris among many others. Her work has been covered in a variety of publications including *Artforum*, *The New York Times*, *Art Review*, *The New Yorker* and more. Mariah Robertson is represented by American Contemporary, NY.

#### **ABOUT GRAND ARTS**

**Grand Arts** is a non-profit art project space in downtown Kansas City that commissions and assists artists in the production and realization of ambitious contemporary art projects. Functioning as a laboratory, its mission is to provide financial, technical and logistical support to artists while encouraging conceptual risk-taking and experimentation at all stages of the creative process. **Grand Arts gallery hours are Thursday and Friday 10am – 5pm and Saturday 11am – 5pm or by appointment.**

For more information on this exhibition or Grand Arts, please visit us online at [www.grandarts.com](http://www.grandarts.com), find us on Facebook or contact:

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**MARIAH ROBERTSON**  
LET'S CHANGE





## MARIAH ROBERTSON

When I first visited Mariah Robertson in her Brooklyn studio in 2009, I felt like I had been transported into the lab of a psychedelic scientist. Her small workspace, dominated by a giant enlarger and industrial metal sink with an attached garden hose, smelled of chemicals. On a hook were a respirator and an apron. Prints were hanging from the ceiling on clothespins, drying like laundry above our heads. The studio was littered with colored gels, vats of chemicals, and rolls of photographic paper (both exposed and not)—ingredients necessary for making her photographs. The artist cleared a small space on the floor, about four by four feet, and she proceeded to pull out print after print for me to view. The photographs were oddly shaped, most of them cut unevenly or even ripped, but the artist didn't seem to notice. Each photograph was more brilliant than the next. The works exploded with highly saturated color, odd textures, bursts of shimmers, and chemical messes. In them I saw flashes of recognizable imagery (male nudes, palm leaves, geometrical shapes), but mostly they looked like abstract fields of color and drips—paintings made with light and photographic chemicals. They belonged to a world far away from the drab industrial Brooklyn building we were in. They existed on another plane of reality.

Robertson makes her pictures by using analog darkroom process—cutting and combining negatives, dripping and coating chemicals on photographic paper, exposing the paper (sometimes with a flashlight) to colored gels and lights. She often employs multiple techniques in a single image—enlarging negatives, employing filters, crafting hand-made patterns of colored gels, and placing objects (such as agate, hoses, and glass) directly on the paper. By applying critical analyses to the rules of traditional darkroom photography, she challenges the very definition of the medium and blurs the line between representation and abstraction. Each work is unique, the end result of a process in the darkroom that seemed as mysterious to the artist as it did to me. During my visit, Robertson recounted her obsession with trying to re-make a certain print. But a process like hers cannot be duplicated as it's not an exact science. There is an imprecision in how long the paper is exposed, how long it sits in the bath and how it is fixed. Each work has the imprint of the artist's hand; each is absolutely unique in the world.

One of the defining characteristics of photography (arguably its most unique and seductive quality) is that it

Mariah Robertson, *100*, 2011. 50"x75". C-print. Photo courtesy the artist.

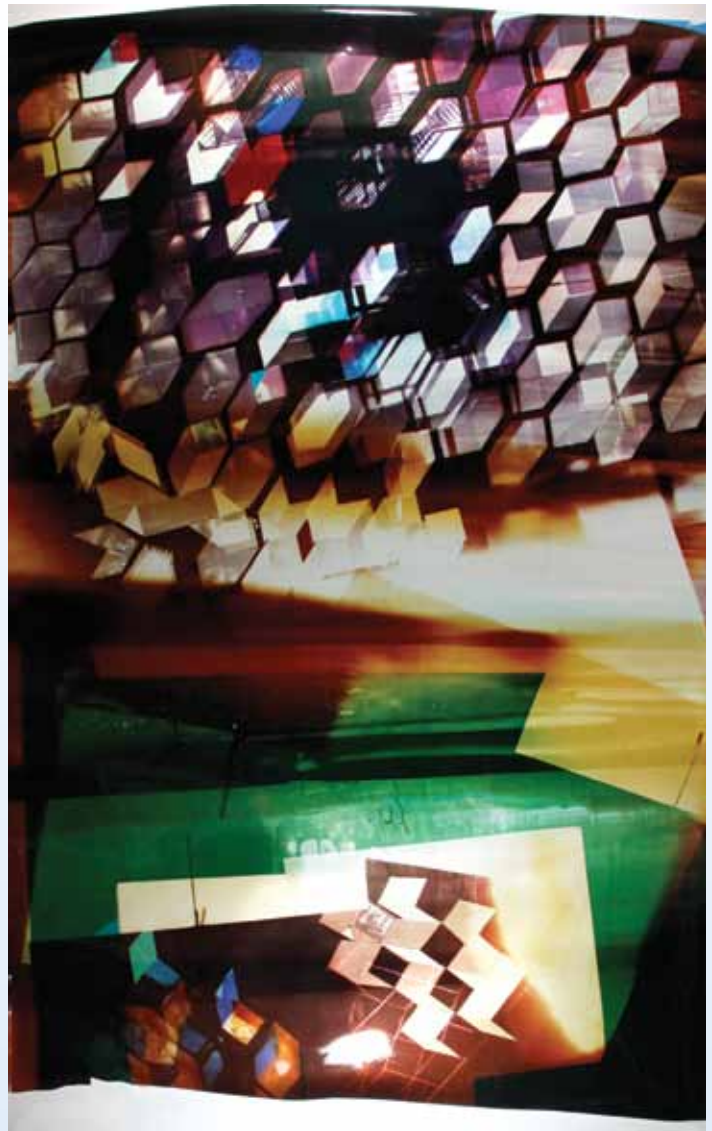




can be mass-produced. "You click the button, we do the rest" Kodak famously advertised to the scores of enthusiasts that took it up as a hobby. In traditional photography there is no original. Photographs exist in editions and they can be easily reproduced and widely disseminated. Photography is a democratic medium that has become ubiquitous in the age of iPhones and Facebook. Of course, any connoisseur of darkroom printing knows that the artistry of printing is as nuanced as woodworking, but photography's ability to exist in multiples and to be viewed widely has been one of its defining properties. Robertson's work challenges everything we know and assume about the medium today. Her process recalls photography's infancy, when it was an art not yet available to many and developed by risk-takers intent on finding a new visual form. When photography was invented, it was the domain of alchemists, dreamers, and spiritualists. There were no rules. Gentleman scientists (of course, the early pioneers of photography were mostly men) dedicated themselves to the art of drawing with light, cooking up home recipes to calibrate the right balance of chemicals so that an image could be recorded permanently on a light sensitive material. Through trial and error, the science of photography was developed, replete with rules, conventions, and mass manufactured papers and chemicals. Along the way, hard-edged realists and the socially concerned took up the medium because of its ability to tell us something about the world. And in the twenty first century, photography sits at the precipice of a digital revolution. But for Robertson, the secrets of the darkroom and the mysterious element of time that enchanted her Victorian predecessors still promise endless possibilities.

Can making a photograph be considered a performance? Unlike the mechanical precision of today's digital photo labs, Robertson's work is the result of a private performance in the darkroom. The physicality of her work, which is getting larger and more monumental in scale, means that the artist's body is an integral part of how the work is made and how it looks. The limitations of her body (her height, the length of her arms) are just as much a factor in the outcome of her work as are the limitations of light, available chemicals, and the space of her darkroom. Originally, Robertson studied sculpture and she is self-taught in photography. While she was a graduate student in sculpture at Yale University, she began experimenting in the darkroom. Her unique photographs reveal her sculptural roots in her attention to the tactile qualities of the medium and her unfettered, hands-on approach to production. In the darkroom, she breaks all the rules of exposure and proper developing techniques. Her work can be seen as an exercise against a codified set of rules, an approach to photography that is an immersive conceptual project. It is in the pushing against the conventions of photography that Robertson is carving out an artistic language of her own.

Robertson's finished photographs are presented in unorthodox ways, underscoring how the process of making them is integral to the experience of viewing them. Often cut from large rolls of photographic paper in the dark,



Mariah Robertson, 59, 2011. 86"x53". C-print. Photo courtesy the artist.

the odd shaped pieces of paper sit uncomfortably in their frames, creating hybrid sculpture-photographs. The photographs battle with their frames, resting and curling at the bottom, a cardinal sin in traditional photography presentation. Robertson calls our attention to the surface of the paper, emphatically challenging the notion of a photograph as a window into the world. She makes us aware of the frame, of the outer edges of the paper, where it has been ripped unevenly, and the small buckles and bulges on the paper are evidence of being handled by the artist. These imperfections are the antithesis of the glossy perfection of so much photography today. Instead she shares an affinity with painters or sculptors—those that spend time making things in the studio.

Recently, Robertson's work has taken on the scale of site-specific installation. Her large-scale photographs inhabit rooms—they hang from ceilings, are draped on walls, and cascade elegantly onto the floor. In many ways, she has come full circle, re-visiting the space of sculpture through her practice in photography. These ambitious photographic sculptures, which push the limits of chance creation, are



as beautiful as they are fragile. For her exhibition at Grand Arts, Robertson has created three 100-foot photographs—the length of a roll of commercially available photographic paper. To make them, the artist essentially works blind, never able to see the entire work, rolling up portions of the paper as she works on other parts. The images on the long photographs ultimately rely more on chance than precision, but each piece of the triptych has a visual theme: male nudes, palm trees, and color abstractions. In addition to the large prints, a handful of framed photos on temporary walls re-orient the flow through the gallery. The whole gallery effectively becomes a container for her photographs, a world created by the artist that viewers can step into. In this environment, Robertson conjures the history and myths of photography, evoking the unknowable and the magical.

Eva Respini  
Associate Curator Department of Photography  
The Museum of Modern Art  
January 2012

Grand Arts and the Artist would like to thank Mr. Dipple and American Contemporary Gallery, NY.

Top: Mariah Robertson, studio view. 2012. Photo by the artist.

Right: Mariah Robertson, 9, 2011. Installation view, BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art. Photo courtesy the artist.

Cover Image: Mariah Robertson, 7, 2012. 82"x50". C-print. Photo courtesy the artist.





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*Kyeo.tv*

July 13, 2011

## Art Review: Mariah Robertson - Where Did All The Print Go?

by NICHOLAS ROBINSON on JULY 13, 2011

in ART & DESIGN



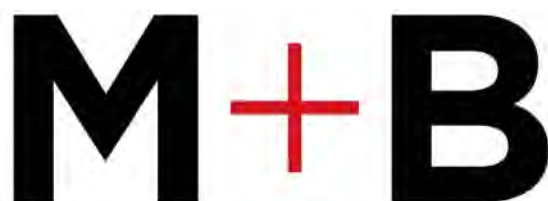
Smattered across giant six-foot over sheets of photo paper are the results of Mariah Robertson's take on our technology-saturated world.

Born in 1975 and working in Brooklyn, New York, Robertson uses photography, sculpture and painting in her work, which sympathises with the slower pace of print photography. By using a hands-on approach to change the images physically, she manipulates chemicals into colourful shapes and splats to bring the surface alive. Using huge pieces of photo paper to mourn the loss of print photography is perhaps a little extreme, yet the colourful blemishes that mark the giant sheets are a nod to what digital photography fails to acknowledge. By using chemicals to stain the paper with different shapes, splats and drips, the images attempt to invoke feelings of nostalgia and, hiding behind the mesh of luminous greens, pinks, blues and oranges, are real images carrying on with what they were doing before the chemical storm. If you have ever played with a lomography camera, such as a Diana or a Holga, and taken pictures on a used roll of film, then you will understand the effects used in Mariah Robertson's first UK solo exhibition. Sitting naked on a chair, minding his own business with one leg crossed over the other, is a headless man. The piece is so long that it snakes its way up and down walls, over the floor and lies in gentle ruffles in corners. And the giant paper snake, called 9 2011 C Print on Metallic Paper, is covered with shapes, shattered blocks of colour, smoky brown wisps that look like forests

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flecked with dots of white, and sections of deep purple with perfect white circles that look like ripples on a pond's surface. There is fun to be had with this exhibition. Simply enjoying the colours and shapes or looking for the images hiding beneath the manipulated surfaces of the giant pieces of photo paper will tickle almost anyone's eyes, not just those 'arty-types'. It's a fun space to be in and you can choose whether or not to absorb the nostalgia. Perhaps one of the images will bring back a memory folded in a childhood photo album. You never know unless you try.





[www.artknowledgeews.com](http://www.artknowledgeews.com)

June 27, 2011

## The Baltic Centre Presents Mariah Robertson's First UK Solo Exhibition

Written by John Charlton

Gateshead, UK.- The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art presents American artist Mariah Robertson's first solo exhibition in the UK, opening on Saturday 25th June. Highly aware of our technology-saturated world, the images Mariah Robertson creates typically have a nostalgia that, at first, seems to hark back to a slower, pre-digital era. Using photographic paper, often at a monumental scale, her darkroom experiments utilise analogue techniques now in their demise to create a synergy between chance, luck and her highly-considered methods. "Maria Robertson" will be on view at the Baltic through October 30th.

Robertson manipulates the tools and materials of the photographic process to capitalise on their inherent strengths and weaknesses. She uses photographs, photograms, colour separation, oversaturated hues and exposes objects directly onto the paper, bypassing the camera lens. An array of chemical drips and mishaps are also used to 'paint' the photographic surface. Collageing disparate elements onto irregularly cut photographic paper, Robertson layers them into a single composition to create what she terms an 'impossible' image. The elaborate compositions, lush with colour, include both representative and abstract images; recent motifs include palm fronds, male nudes and grids. However, her works are as much about the process of making as they are the interplay between different images and sources.

Her work is presented in a way that brings a sculptural presence. "8", 2011, included in the exhibition, rests in a heavy, over-sized frame that stands directly on the floor and leans against the wall. The roughly-cut glossy, metallic paper is allowed to curl inside, pressing against its limits. "9", 2011, also included, is an entire roll of photographic paper, a structure that runs across and cascades from the ceiling, unraveling around the gallery like a film-strip. The physicality brought about by these modes of display moves the work far beyond the traditions of her chosen medium. Re-writing its rules, she also preserves them, encapsulating a time and method before it disappears completely.

Mariah Robertson was born in 1975. In 1997 she was awarded a BA from University of California, Berkeley, California and gained a MFA in sculpture from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut in 2005. Her solo exhibitions include 'I am Passions', Marvelli Gallery, NY (2009), 'Nudes, Still Lives and Landscapes', Guild & Greyshkul, New York (2007) and 'Please lie down and take a nap with me in my grave', Guild & Greyshkul, New York (2006). She has presented work in the following group shows: 'Greater New York', PS1, New York (2010), 'Out of Focus: Photography', Saatchi Gallery London (2009), 'The Company Presents: A

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Video Screening', Miami Beach Florida (2009) and 'Palmar: Experimental Photography', Marvelli Gallery New York (2009). 'Sonata for Executioner and Various Young Women', André Schlechtriem Contemporary, New York, NY (2008), 'FRIENDLY', CRG Gallery, New York, NY (2008). 'Where To: Artists Environ a Cab', The Lab, San Francisco (2007) and 'STUFF: International Contemporary Art from the Collection of Burt Asron', Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit (2007). 'The Truth About Susan Gescheidle The Centre of Attention', Chicago (2006) and 'Help Yourself', Helen Pitt Gallery, Vancouver (2006). Loop Video Festival, Barcelona (2005), 'Great Indoor', Walter Gallery San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco (2003). Mariah Robertson lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

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the guardian

July 16, 2011, pg. 36

## **Mariah Robertson, Gateshead**

If the US artist Mariah Robertson seems hell bent on rescuing the raw materials of the pre-digital darkroom from encroaching obsolescence, she does so with a highly irreverent disregard for photographic conventions. Massive sheets and rolls of photographic paper are beautifully distressed by baroque cross-associations between recognisable photographic male nudes and an elaborate network of abstract chemical stains, evocative silhouettes and deliberate technical errors. One roll unravels from the ceiling and across the gallery floor like an improvised dream narrative. Nothing could be further from the posed sobriety of your traditional family snap.

***BALTIC, to 30 Oct***

*RC*



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June 27, 2011



*How does an artist make work in extreme circumstances?* In this film, artist [Mariah Robertson](#) wears a makeshift hazmat suit, face mask, and breathing apparatus to create a series of hand-processed color photographs in her darkroom in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Navigating both a toxic process and discontinued materials, Robertson's ability to perfect her technique is a race against time, dwindling resources, and her ability to endure difficult conditions. The artist's unorthodox, photo-based projects often employ multiple techniques in a single image: enlarging negatives, employing filters, crafting hand-made patterns of colored gels, and placing objects—such as agate, hoses, and glass—directly on the paper. In addition, Robertson achieves one-of-a-kind results by developing each photo in an artisanal fashion by spraying chemicals and by controlling reactions with variable temperatures and the strength of her materials. In the end, Robertson's tragicomic images poke fun at a traditional photography culture while exploring the slow obsolescence of analog processes in a digital era.



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**Greater New York 2010 MoMA PS1**

**Pgs 172 – 173  
Catalogue Essay**

MARIAH ROBERTSON

b.1975

Using a variety of experimental darkroom techniques and antiquated processes, Mariah Robertson creates unique prints that are impossible to replicate. Upending notions of representation, documentation, and reproducibility in photography, Robertson's work results in what she describes as "impossible images", created from colored filters, dusty negatives, photograms, photo collage, and unusual chemical processes. Treating the medium itself as a complex system with its own internal logic, Robertson attempts to violate the rules of photography through technical manipulations, conceptually probing the inner workings of the image-making process. Rejecting the meticulousness of typical darkroom printing processes, her photographs are unstable, messy, and kaleidoscopic, combining abstract shapes, patterns, and areas of bright color with representational imagery.

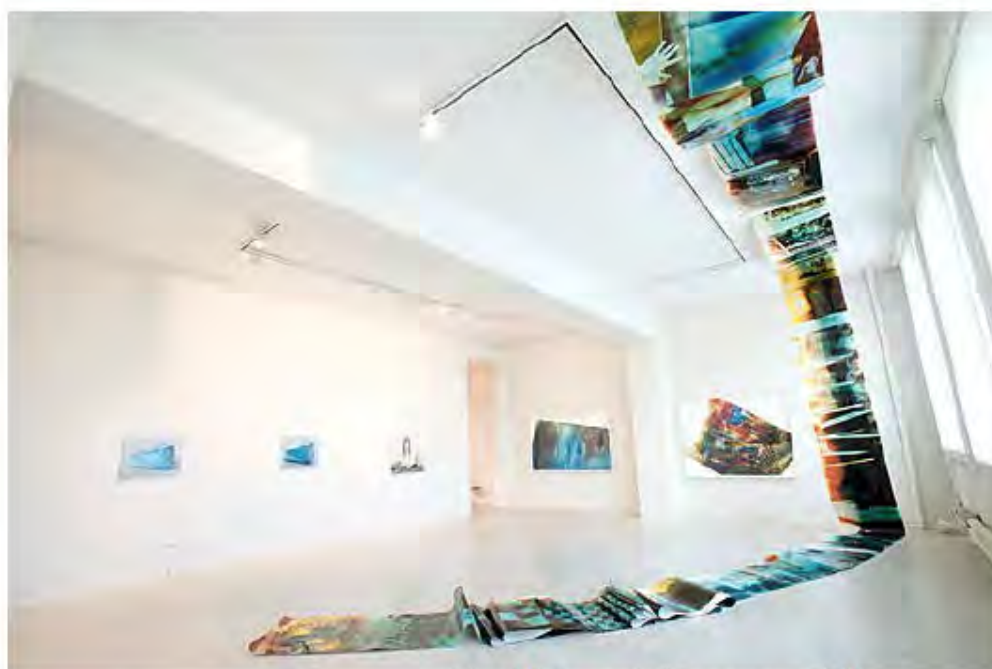
Robertson's work is inherently unpredictable, relying on chance and spontaneous decisions; because of the precarious nature of her process, she never knows what the final product will be before she begins. Haphazardly cutting from a large roll of photographic paper, Robertson's prints maintain rough edges and irregular shapes and sizes, giving them a sculptural dimension that emphasizes their status as unique objects rather than simply photographic images. Moreover, in using analog film and paper, outdated chemicals, and processes that have been marginalized in the wake of digital photography, Robertson further highlights the inability to re-create these prints, as the means to do so become increasingly rare.

When she does include representational content, it is often domestic in nature, including recurring images of interior scenes, house plants, and nude figures. Adopting and deconstructing the photographic still life as a template, Robertson inverts and playfully critiques these canonical subjects through technical processes such as solarization, as well as jarring, disjointed juxtapositions. Employing imagery often associated with suburban kitsch, such as palm trees, chintzy florals, and mass-market how-to books, her work uses the most banal of sources to create bizarre, uncanny compositions. Further, her conspicuous use of male nudes, whose faces are never shown, modifies the association of the nude portrait with the female subject. Intentionally disregarding the tenets of "good" photographic practice, Robertson embraces mistakes and experimentation, creating images that attempt to test the boundaries and possibilities of the medium.

# M+B

*NEW YORK*

**May. 27 2010**



Mariah Robertson's 88, on view at P.S. 1.

(Photo: Matthew Septimus/Courtesy of MoMA P.S. 1)

I'm noticing a new approach to artmaking in recent museum and gallery shows. It flickered into focus at the New Museum's "Younger Than Jesus" last year and ran through the Whitney Biennial, and I'm seeing it blossom and bear fruit at "Greater New York," MoMA P.S. 1's twice-a-decade extravaganza of emerging local talent. It's an attitude that says, I know that the art I'm creating may seem silly, even stupid, or that it might have been done before, but that doesn't mean this isn't serious. At once knowingly self-conscious about art, unafraid, and unashamed, these young artists not only see the distinction between earnestness and detachment as artificial; they grasp that they can be ironic and sincere at the same time, and they are making art from this compound-complex state of mind—what Emerson called "alienated majesty."

The best of the work at "Greater New York" pulses with this attitude. The worst of it is full of things that move, light up, or make noise, all frantic enough to make you feel like you're at a carnival rather than a museum. I yearned to see more art here that demands that you stop and be still, like painting, of which there is very little. Instead, the curators—Connie Butler, Neville Wakefield, and Klaus Biesenbach, the museum world's unofficial



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czar these days—favor things that are “about” painting, like Dave Miko’s canvas propped on a little shelf with drips painted on the wall behind it, carrying the heavy-handed title *Lonely Merch Guy*. (When will everyone get over the ossified idea that painting’s particular alchemy is suspect? Bad dogma!)

But let’s look on the sunny side. I counted thirteen artists whose work I really like and twelve others whose work I’d like to see again. Like Liz Magic Laser’s *Mine*, a secret-life-of-women video in which she and a surgeon perform an operation, with medical robots, on her purse (tiny tools snipping the face out of a \$20 bill, for example); the artist simultaneously dismantles and creates, remaking her purse into a Rauschenberg combine. This weirdly familiar otherness goes green in Brian O’Connell’s funny-strange architectural columns composed of potting soil, which make you feel like you’re occupying a very large sand castle. Or David Brooks’s section of real forest mummified in concrete, a sad comment on turning the natural world into doomed playgrounds. Leigh Ledare’s pictures of his mother having sex bring us to the dark heart of the human drive for connection; the sweet sight of Ryan McNamara being taught to dance in the building’s corridors speaks for artists compelled to strip themselves naked (metaphorically or literally) in public. Saul Melman’s gold-leafing of the giant double furnace in the building’s basement may be just another labor-intensive process piece, but it’s also an ancient sarcophagus, a moving memorial to the dead. Equally serious, particularly in their strangeness, are Matt Hoyt’s tiny carved clay objects, which look like sculptural-biological forms and dead rodents. They hint at the innate connection between creating form and creating life.

Much of the most effective work in “Greater New York” also involves the artists’ leaping from medium to medium in madly unexpected ways: Sculpture, music, video, and photography get mashed up; techniques like collage and assemblage are combined with unusual materials like mud, magnets, stolen record albums, and art reviews (even one of my own, in Franklin Evans’s walk-in installation-painting). Mariah Robertson’s long strip of photographs looping along the ceiling and across the floor is photography as sculptural installation, so smudgy and phantasmagoric and unruly that it looks like drawing, a painting, and a filmstrip all at once.

Giant group events are distorting organisms: You can like and hate them in rapid succession. In the 2005 edition of “Greater New York,” there were 162 artists on view, which was ridiculous. In 2010, there are just 68. More critical is what’s not there: a by-now-familiar genus of cynical art that is mainly about gamesmanship, work that is coolly ironic, simply cool, ironic about being ironic, or mainly commenting on art that comments on other art. I’m glad to see it fading away—sincerely and otherwise.

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Art in America  
INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

January 2010

Mariah Robertson

By Stephen Maine

New York City - The 17 unique photographs in Mariah Robertson's third solo exhibition since earning her Yale MFA in 2005, showed her exploring unfamiliar approaches to traditional, chemical-based color photography. In the press release, she says, "I never dust the negatives anymore," a wildly understated dig at the prissy procedures of old-fashioned printing. Composing spontaneously with collaged negatives and other objects on irregularly cut sheets of photo paper (most are roughly 58 by 46 inches, or the reverse, or approximately 20 by 24 inches), Robertson embraces all manner of fudging, fakery, fluff and funk; she disdains mastery. The results are exhilarating: giddy romps under the safelight, mash notes to the elastic shadows of the darkroom.

The exhibition (all works 2009) was chromatically rich, iconographically lean and prone to melodrama.

Despite her primary concern with technical dexterity and formal inventiveness, Robertson also offers recognizable imagery, if dimly glimpsed, in all but a few prints. In previous work she has favored hairy butts and houseplants, but intimate domesticity is lately yielding to forms of crystalline clarity and volcanic effects. A dusky half-circle lined with hot orange-yellow commands the center of the photogram Untitled (18), sucking up swatches of red, green and blue and speeding them toward a vanishing-point vortex: James Rosenquist meets Man Ray for cocktails in Disneyland during a solar eclipse.

In an untitled, unique C-print, a quarter-circle of thick blue sky studded with palm trees seen from below snaps hard against an orange field etched with the racing perspective of a folded, radically foreshortened grid. Untitled (30) comprises two prints: a larger, jagged one in which a sheet of shattered glass overlays damp reds and greens that blend to a coffee color; and a silvery head shot of a spiky palm frond. As in all these works, a snug white frame corrals the pandemonium but heightens the visual pressure.

The photogram Untitled (47) compartmentalizes pedestrian shots of a West Coast streetscape in a wonky grid that drifts rightward to counter the leftward tilt of the curling, roughly sheared sheet. At top center is an upside-down, day-for-night potted palm that is vaguely nightmarish; chemical splashes evoke randomness and entropy; inexplicable yellowish flare-ups hint at bonfires and apocalypse. The work orchestrates photography's image-centricity, sculpture's physical presence and the potential of painting to forestall meaning: a twilight zone.



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**The New York Times**

**October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009**

MARIAH ROBERTSON

'I Am Passions'

A growing number of contemporary photographers seem to be forsaking the ease and polish of digital image making for the romantic uncertainty of the darkroom. Mariah Robertson, who has shown at the SoHo gallery Guild & Greyshkul, which is now defunct, and is currently having her first solo show in Chelsea, is going a step further. In a giddy, colorful and highly experimental series, she cuts up negatives, splashes chemicals around and leaves the edges of her prints raw.

Ms. Robertson trained as a sculptor and she clearly thinks in three dimensions. Her pictures are multilayered, with cubes as a prominent motif. (Others include palm leaves and male nudes.) There are also quilt patterns and echoes of scattered-square Dada collages.

The combination of photographic techniques, often in the same picture, produces a wonderfully unstable field. Objects and abstract forms seem unmoored, slipping between the immediacy of the photogram, in which an object is placed directly on sensitized paper and exposed to light, and the more remote, mysterious processes of the C-print and gelatin silver print.

Given how much is happening at the abstract and technical levels, the nude figures are distracting. And the roughly scissored edges of the prints, meant to remind us that these are singular images, sometimes detract from their beauty. But Ms. Robertson makes a strong case that photography isn't just for perfectionists.

KAREN ROSENBERG

# M+B

*NEW YORK*

October 16<sup>th</sup> 2009

October 16, 2009

## SEE MARIAH ROBERTSON'S GLAMOROUS PHOTOGRAMS

The Mariah Robertson collects her splashy photograms – photos created without a camera. The Yale alumni has been holing herself up in a darkroom with random objects and materials like photographic paper, film, and drawings, all of which she cuts up and dyes with chemicals, then exposes to various light forms to create photos that could also pass as trompe l'oeil paintings. Strewn through with palm trees and the occasional naked torso, and saturated in tropical hues, Robertson's series feels like images from a film-noir set – or maybe plans for a new, gaudy, alluring Art Deco mansion in Miami. Emma Pearce