

M+B

MUSÉE
VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

MARIAH ROBERTSON: REPETITION & DIFFERENCE

By Ann Catherine Hughes



Looking at Mariah Robertson's work for the first time, one might assume they are looking at the plans for an intricately cut stained glass window. They would be delightfully mistaken. Making its first appearance on the West Coast, *Repetition & Difference* at the M+B Gallery invites visitors to experience something beautiful and wholly unique.

Mariah Robertson introduces new possibilities to the realm of photography in her psychedelic photograms. Defying photographic conventions, she creates colorful, geometric prints without the use of a camera. In the privacy of a darkroom, Robertson exposes photographic paper for a brief two seconds, experimenting with the use of color and movement of her exposure masks. She works completely in the dark, exploring and embracing the possibilities of what her photographs can become.

According to Robertson, these works "are about time, in small measurable increments and the attempt to replicate, reiterate or recreate a set of actions and also the abilities, limitations, and goals of an operator." Robertson, as an operator, attempts to replicate a series of actions, pushing against the limitations imposed by the visual impairment of darkness.

One of the photograms, titled *153, 2020*, is presented in a hexagonal frame. The print contains strong, varying shades of red and violet, as well as soft, mild shades of blue, green, and yellow. The combination of inorganic shapes with the hard edges of the frame creates an at once chaotic and serene mood, modulated by the contrasting use of warmer cooler colors. The hex frame gives the print the appearance of an abstracted gemstone.

172 173, 2020 is representative of the repetition in Robertson's series. Its two columns, each with four rectangular bars stacked on top of one another, sport two paired colors, again contrasting warm and cool. The colored bands morph and bleed together, from orange and dark pink, to golden yellow and dark blue,

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dark magenta and burgundy to dark blueberry and swampy green. Each column was made on separate sheets of photographic paper. Bars are separated by hard edges lined with black and white, but the color-blocked blazes interact kaleidoscopically across the muntins. Robertson demonstrates the unattainability of a perfect replication in her fast-and-loose medium in the way that the two prints don't repeat—but they do rhyme.

The M+B Gallery provides visitors with an intimate space, befitting the works, where they can take the time to fully appreciate these prismatic prints in the dreamy tranquility that they demand.

Repetition & Difference will be on view at the M+B Gallery from January 23, 2021, through February 27, 2021.

