

MUSEUM 52

Mariah Robertson

Education

1997 BA UC Berkeley
2005 MFA Yale University

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2011
Museum 52, New York
The Company, LA

2009
Take Better Pictures, Museum 52, New York
I am passions, Marvelli Gallery, New York

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

Selected Group Exhibitions

2010
Greater New York, PS1/MoMA
Mexican Blanket, Museum 52, London
Color as Form: Playing the Spectrum, Silver Eye Centre for Photography, Pittsburgh,
A Word Like Tomorrow Wears Things Out, Sikkema Jenkins, NY
Greenberg Van Doren, NY
Transfer Function, Zieher Smith, NY

2009
XOXO, Apartment Show, organized by Joshua Smith and Denise Kupferschmidt,
Brooklyn, NY
If the Dogs are Barking, Apartment Show at Artists Space, New York, NY
Experimental Photography, Marvelli Gallery, New York
The Company Presents: A Video Screening, Miami Beach, FL
Wrong: A Program of Text and Image, curated by Jibade-Khalil Huffman, Eighth Veil,
Los Angeles, CA
I'm Feeling Lucky, P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York, NY
On From Here, Guild & Greyshkul, New York, NY

MUSEUM 52

2008

Sonata for Executioner and Various Young Women curated by Nicholas Weist, André Schleichtrien Contemporary, New York, NY
Deadliest Catch: Hamptons curated by Michael Sellinger, CORE: Hamptons, NY
From Viennese Actionism to the Triumph of Vince Young video presentation by Colby Bird, CRG Gallery, New York, NY
Summer Mixtape Volume 1: the Get Smart edition Exit Art, New York, NY
FRIENDLY Organized by Sam Clagnaz and Tommy Hartung, New York, NY

2007

Divine Find curated by Lauren Ross, Stonefox Artspace, New York, NY
A Moving World Gallery w 52, New York, NY
Where To: Artists Environ a Cab, The Lab, San Francisco, CA
Practical F/X, Mary Boone Gallery, New York, NY
NYSTUFF: 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 Seventh Side of the Die Alona Kagan Gallery, New York, NY
Please lie down and take a nap with me in my grave Solo exhibition at Guild & Greyskul, 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, California
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

MUSEUM 52

Selected Bibliography

Art Review, New Yorker, October 2009

Rosenburg, Karen, New York Times, October 23rd 2009

Palomar, Experimental Photography, New Yorker Magazine, June 22nd 2009

Leung, Cynthia. Naked Ambition. Tokion, Spring 2008: 29

Coburn, Tyler. Mariah Robertson: Nudes, Still Lives, and Landscapes. Art Review, January 2008: 122

Leung, Cynthia. Cynthia Leung Talks to Mariah Robertson. NY ARTS Magazine, Nov/Dec 2007, pp.36-37

Supernature Times Nature. Rocket Magazine, May 2007

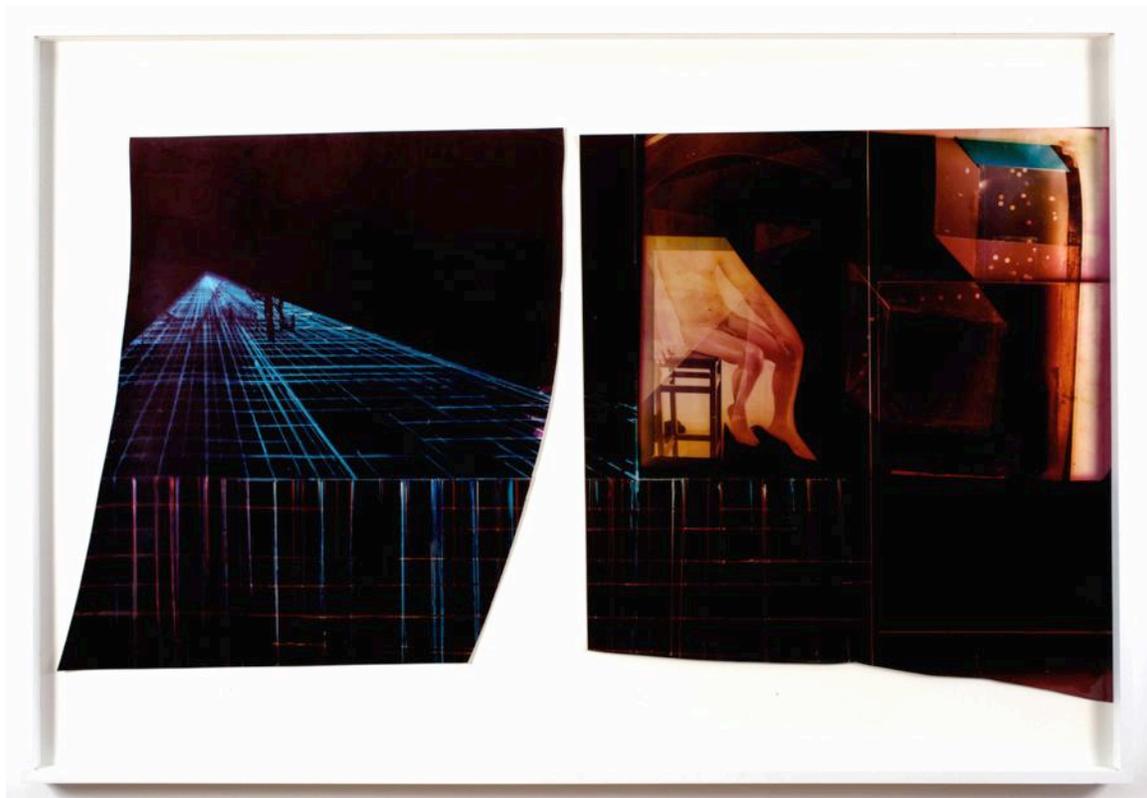
Thorson, Alice, A Crisis of Self, The Kansas, 2006

MUSEUM 52

MUSEUM 52 EXHIBITIONS

MUSEUM 52

Mariah Robertson
Take Better Pictures
28 May - 27 June 2009



3
2009
Unique C-prints on metallic paper
66 x 45 inches

MUSEUM 52



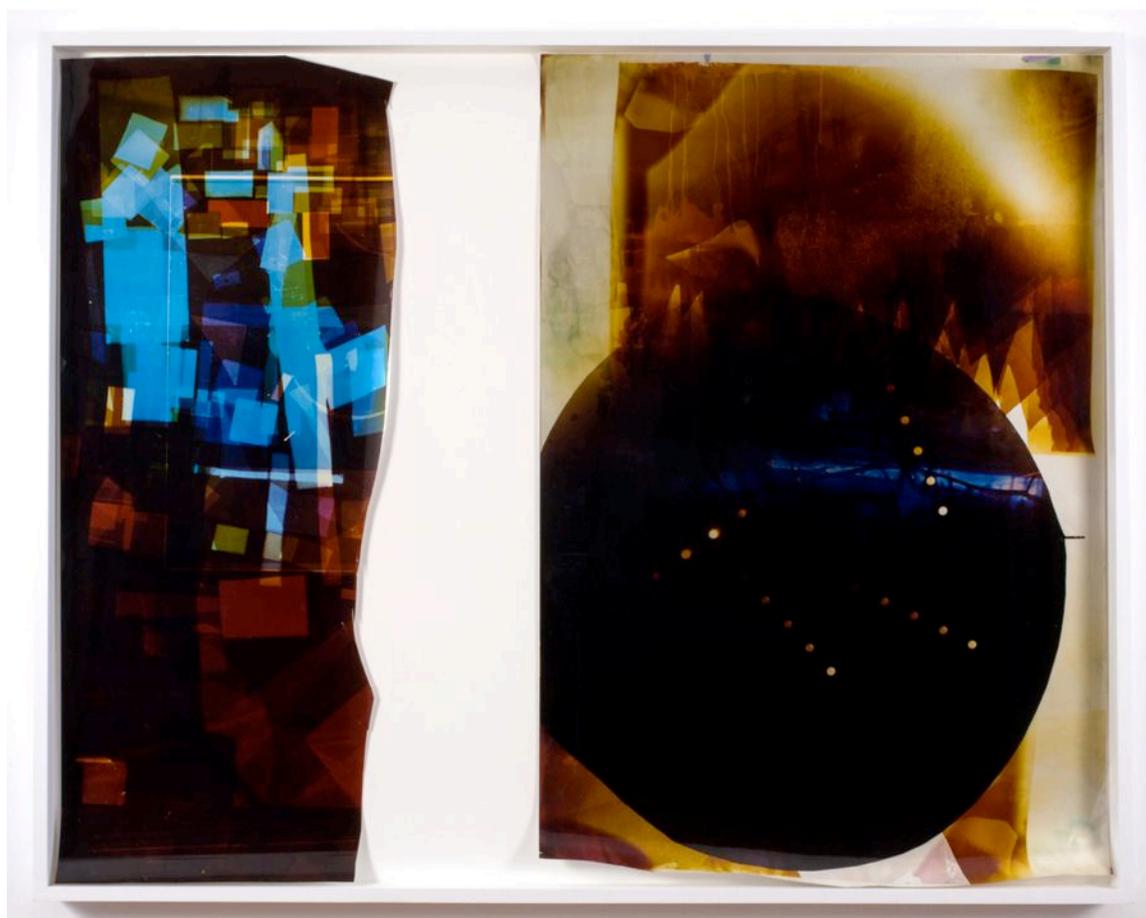
4 (i)
2009
Unique C-prints on metallic paper
57.5 x 46 inches

MUSEUM 52



5
2009
Unique C-prints on metallic paper
60 x 49.5 inches

MUSEUM 52



6
2009
Unique C-prints on metallic paper
57.5 x 46 inches

MUSEUM 52

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

MUSEUM 52

Greater New York

PS1/MoMA. 2010



MUSEUM 52



MUSEUM 52



MUSEUM 52



MUSEUM 52



88

2010

**Unique photographic print on an entire roll of glossy archival paper
30 x 1200 inches (paper size)
Installation dimensions variable**

MUSEUM 52

Mariah Robertson: Nudes, Still Lives, and Landscapes

Guild & Greyshkul

November 3- December 8, 2007

Opening Reception Saturday November 3rd, 2007

In Mariah Robertson's exhibition *Nudes, Still Lives, and Landscapes*, the conceptual artist revisits early photographic techniques to question the transparency of viewing the present. Techniques like ambrotype, solarization, and photomontage threaten to disappear in the wake of digital photography. In using what Robertson calls "alternative historical practices," her uncanny black and white photographs read as contemporary critiques on the subjective nature of looking. If classical still life photography dictates that the technique be crystal-clear and the objects presented be mute subjects, Robertson deftly, and with a sly sense of humor, appropriates the standard tropes of still life photography to critique what we view as normal, innocuous, and natural. In decisively reaching for conceptual tactics of appropriation and reframing, the deadpan, seemingly "normal" photographs of nudes, still lives, and landscapes become charged fields of looking, full of interference from an unstable past.

By using manual in-camera and darkroom techniques, the physical manipulations Robertson uses are foregrounded in the reading of her work, calling attention to the fractured manner of viewing the present. In "Found Self Portrait, Modified," Robertson re-photographs a 1978 Queen album cover of a frieze of nude women on bicycles, using solarization and negative-collage to superimpose a target onto the busy image. Within the bull's eye is a woman whom Robertson identifies as her physical alter ego, or doppelgänger, yet only in hindsight. Born in 1975, Robertson would only have been 3-years old at the time of the album's release. The artist's ambivalent claim of self-representation through the pop-culture image becomes a humorous appropriation of the past, and of projecting the self against the anonymous crowd of barenaked ladies.

In "Nude with Afghani Export Rug," Robertson uses solarization again to politicize the classic still life *mise en scene*: the nude body within the domestic interior. A nude man is presented cropped below the waist and viewed from behind, standing partly on a woven carpet made for export and dragged back by its owner from overseas. Woven into the ornate carpet are objects of war: AK-47s, helicopters, and tanks, all mutely presenting an unseen battle "over there" at odds within the American, domestic setting safely enclosing it. Through solarization, the images on the carpet jump out in strong contrasts, with the nude male becoming one among many objects for the viewer to consider, or just another body.

In "Still Life 3," Robertson considers the complexity of representing the present moment. Here Robertson uses ambrotype (wet plate glass negative), a technique from the 1850s, framing the objects within as artifacts charged by the past. Against a dime-store floral print backdrop sits an opened 1970s book on *How to Photograph Female Nudes*, its dated images of oiled female bodies at odds with the skull placed against the book's spine. In this merging of contradictory cultural moments, the viewing of the image becomes a fraught negotiation with the complex past, instead of a safe, nostalgic seduction.

Mariah Robertson graduated from the Yale M.F.A. program in 2005. Robertson has recently exhibited in: Practical F/X, Mary Boone Gallery, New York, 2007; Divine Find, Stonefox Artspace, New York, 2007; Haunted States, Grand Arts, Kansas City, 2006; and *The Seventh Side of the Die*, Alona Kagan Gallery, New York City, 2006. Mariah Robertson currently lives in New York City.

Guild & Greyshkul is located at 28 Wooster Street, New York, NY, 10013. Hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-6pm. For more information, please contact the gallery at 212-625-9224 or visit www.guildgreyshkul.com.

MUSEUM 52

Mariah Robertson
NUDES, STILL LIVES AND LANDSCAPES
November 3, 2007 – December 8, 2007, Guild and Greyskul, NY



MUSEUM 52

February 4 - March 4, 2006
Opening Reception Saturday February 4, 2006, 6 - 8pm.
Guild & Greyskul

Gallery 1
Mariah Robertson
Please Lie Down and Take a Nap with Me in My Grave

Generally violating the rules of good photography and taste, Mariah Robertson has been using a high quality 4x5 camera and amateur special effects filters to photograph the details of a Northern California home and its surrounding development. Please Lie Down and Take a Nap with Me in My Grave, her first solo exhibition, presents fifteen "abstract" photographs that are the result of her continuing experimentation in the deconstruction of photography.

Mixing the psychedelic with the quotidian Robertson chooses as her subject the details of suburban life. Transforming and distorting the ordinary into something more magical, the effects filters that are usually intended to enhance the splendor of a subject have become Robertson's means of abstraction. In one image, a bedroom light becomes an eclipsed sun moving across the wall revealing the stucco detail of its surface as it passes. The texture of the wall and the refracted glow of the simple light, things she has noticed day in and out, take on a celestial quality. While in another image entitled "Interior Palm" a houseplant silhouetted by late afternoon light as it spills through the blinds of a living room becomes a mesmerizing fan of pattern and color reminiscent of a Cubist painting.

However as much as the work is beautiful and dreamlike it is also conspicuously aware of its creation. There is no "looking through a window onto reality" illusion. These are photographs of the filter as much as they are of the subject and the exhibition as a whole is unwavering in its desire to foreground representation, ie., what you see with a camera is what you cannot see with the eye.

Mariah Robertson studied East Asian Buddhism before receiving her Masters of Fine Arts from Yale University. Her practice has included videos, performance/lecture events, and photography. This is her first exhibition with Guild & Greyskul.

MUSEUM 52

Mariah Robertson
PLEASE LIE DOWN AND TAKE A NAP WITH ME IN MY GRAVE
February 4, 2006 – March 4, 2006, Guild and Greyshkul, NY



MUSEUM 52

SELECTED WORKS

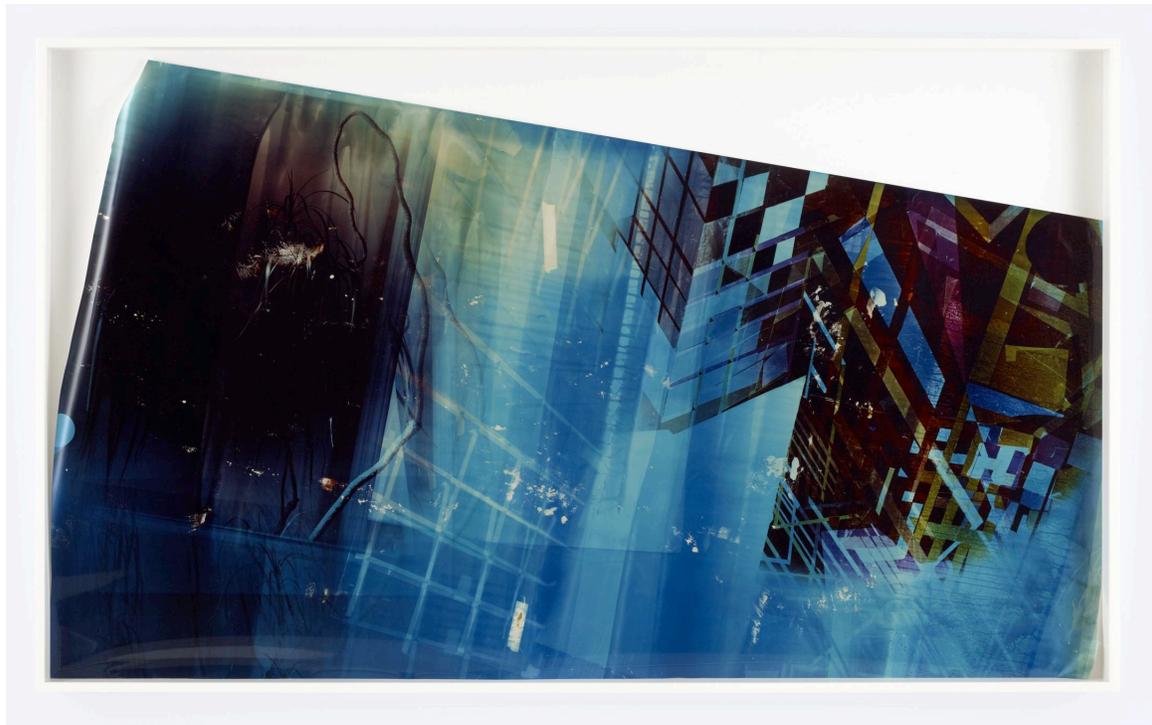
MUSEUM 52



17
2010

Unique color prints on metallic paper
40 x 60 inches

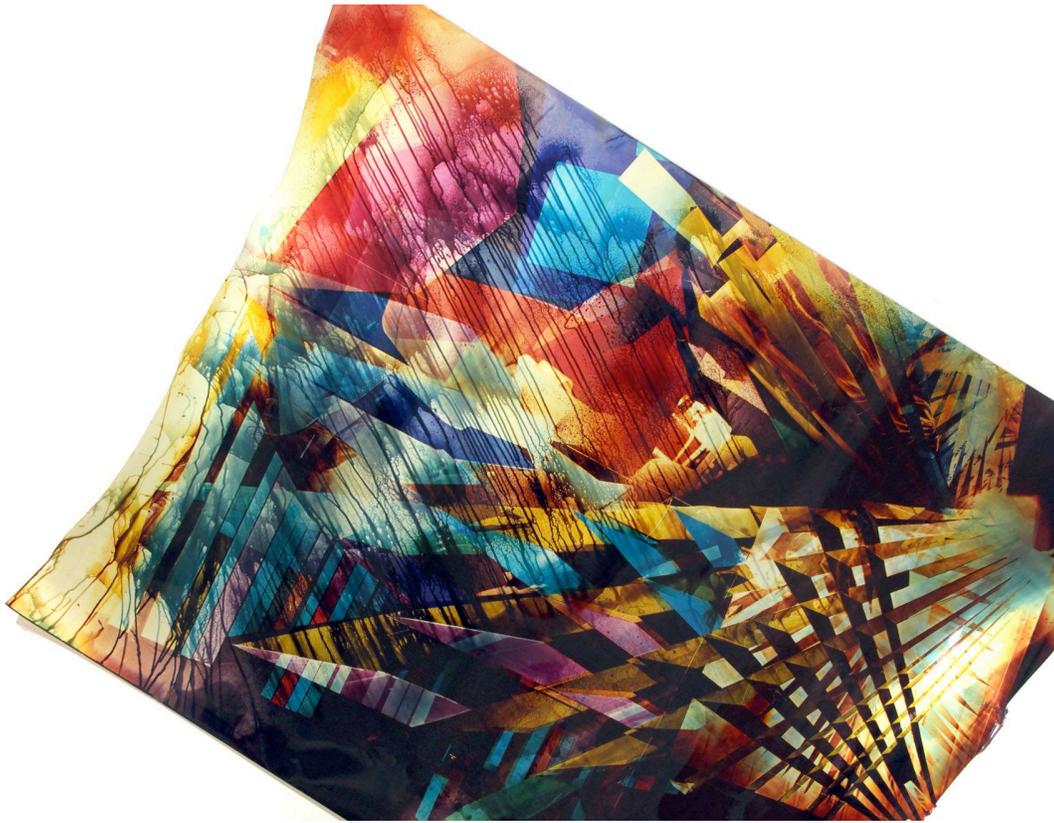
MUSEUM 52



50
2010

Unique color print on metallic paper
50 x 80 inches

MUSEUM 52



45
2010
Unique Color prints on metallic paper
56 x 80 inches

MUSEUM 52



62
2010

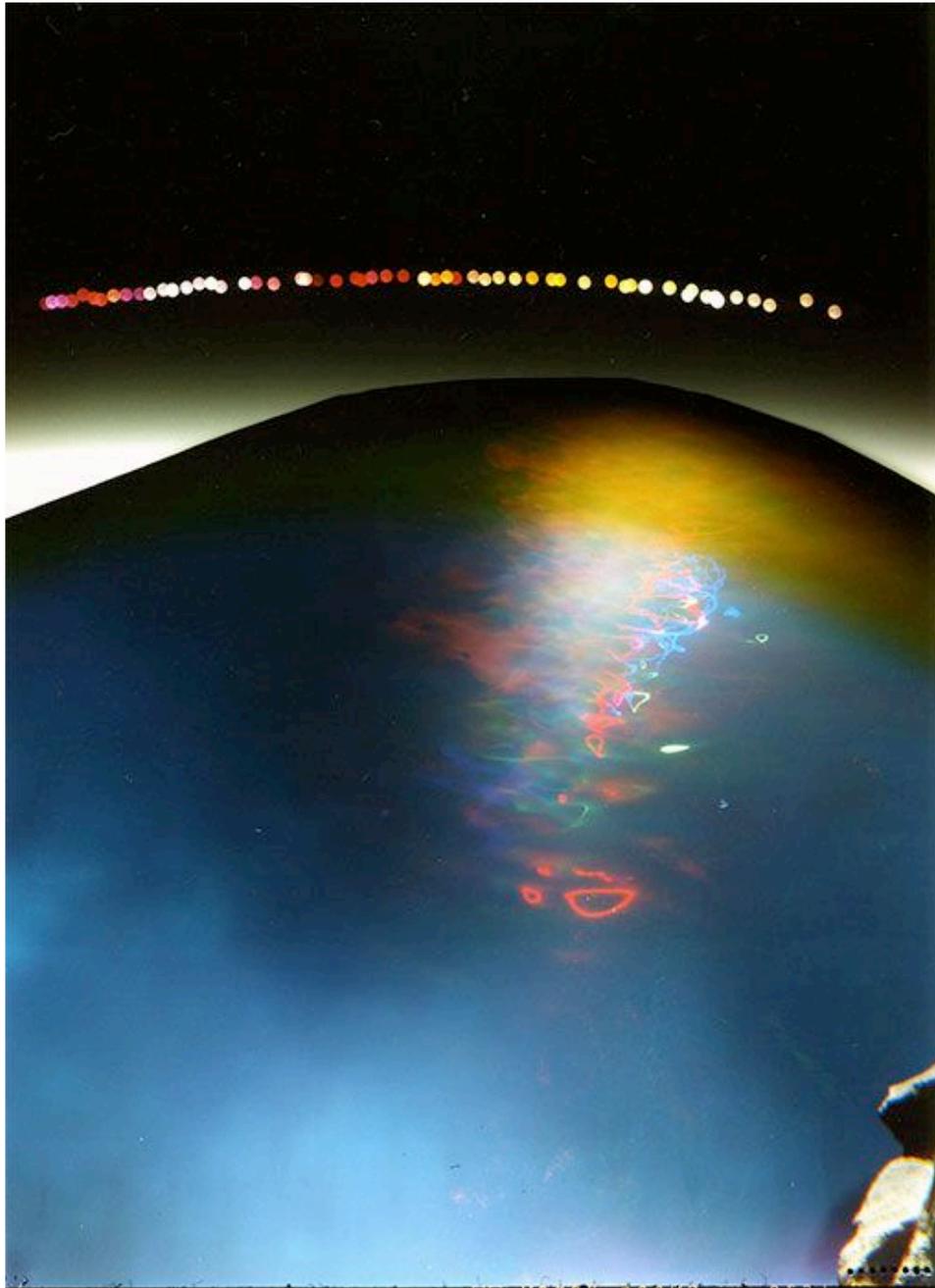
Unique color prints on metallic paper
24 x 46 inches

MUSEUM 52



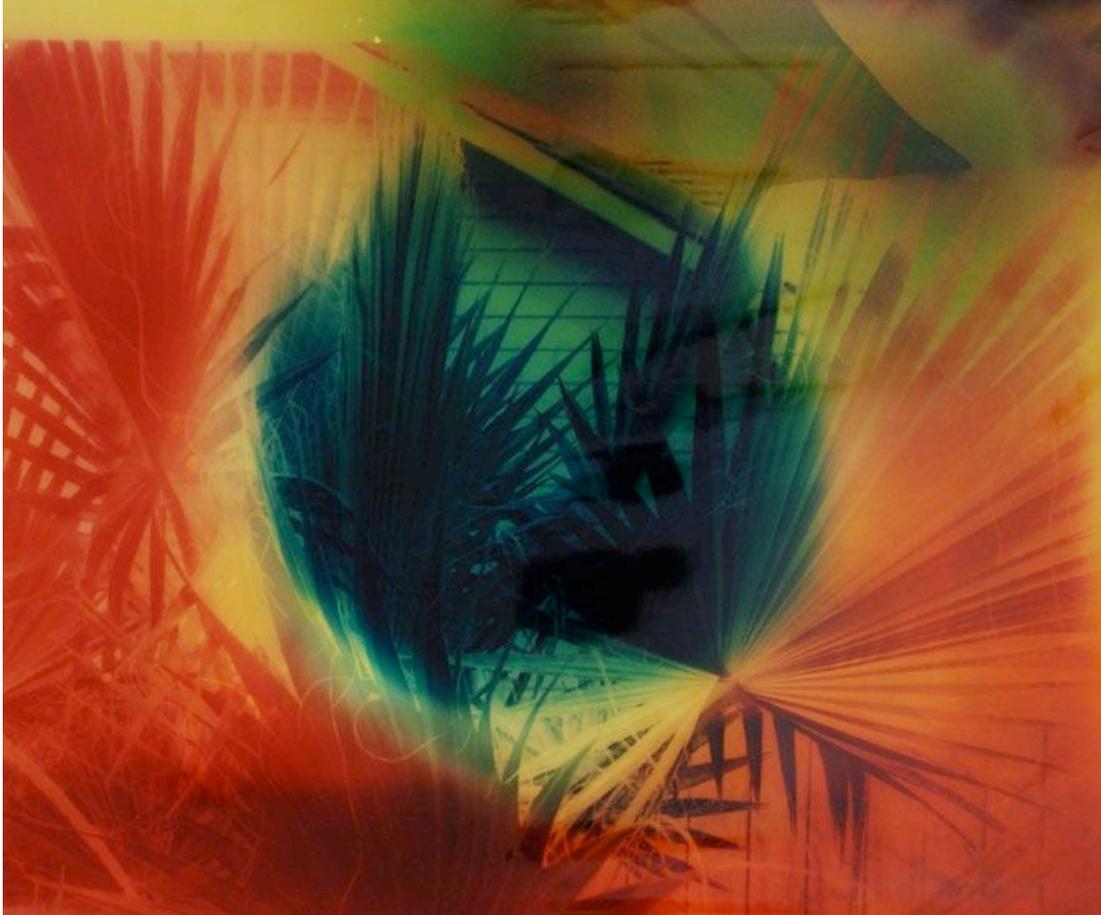
Nude Checking Email (Isosceles), 2008
C-Print
Unique print
20 x 24 inches

MUSEUM 52



Moon and Water Collage 1, 2008
C-Print

MUSEUM 52



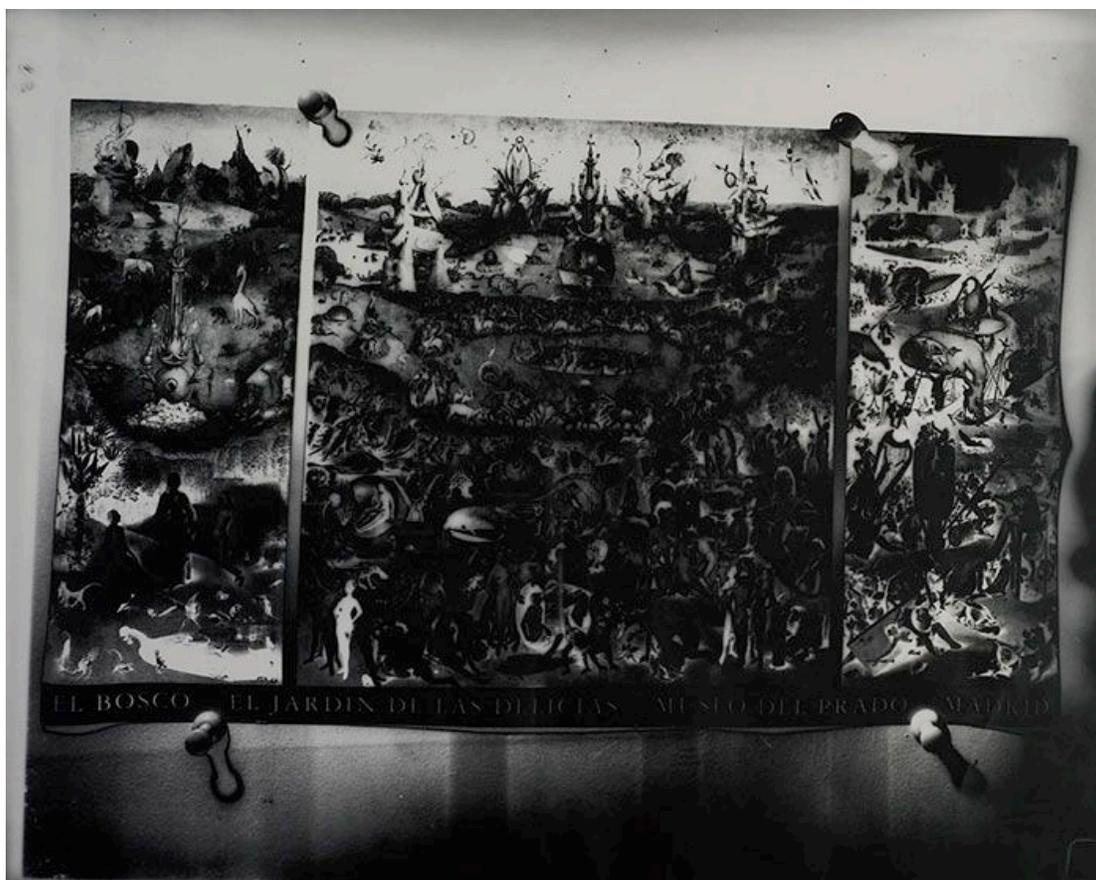
Backyard Palm Tree Solarized, 2008
C-Print
Unique print
20 x 24 inches

MUSEUM 52



Mom and Pop's Pool via Darkroom Witchery 1, 2008
Unique print
20 x 24 inches

MUSEUM 52



El Bosco, 2007
Silver gelatin print,
Edition of 4, 2APs
16 x 20 inches

MUSEUM 52



Untitled Nude 3, 2007
Silver gelatin print,
Edition of 4, 2APs
10 x 8 Inches

MUSEUM 52

PRESS

MUSEUM 52



THE NEW YORKER

June 6th 2010

“50 ARTISTS PHOTOGRAPH THE FUTURE”

With so many photographers vying for the chance to blow you away, this is a noisy show—a little too exciting for its own good. Although its eye is on the future, it captures the anything-goes mood of the moment and finds the medium in flux, if not confusion. “Straight” photographs, most of them seriously bent, are outnumbered by manipulated, collaged, over-painted, appropriated, and digitized images that have little in common except a disregard for traditional picture-making. Rounding up rising stars (Eileen Quinlan, Mariah Robertson, Paul Sepuya) and promising new faces (Lucas Blalock, Daphne Fitzpatrick, K8 Hardy), the curator Dean Daderko puts on the first important photography group show of the season. Through July 3.

Through July 3

HIGHER PICTURES

764 Madison Ave., at 65th St., New York, N.Y.

higherpictures.com

MUSEUM 52

NEW YORK

New York Magazine

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 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

MUSEUM 52

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.

MUSEUM 52

The New York Times

May 27th, 2010

'50 Artists Photograph the Future'

The 22nd century may not look a bit like anything predicted in "50 Artists Photograph the Future," but at least this large show in a tiny space makes for some exotic sights in the present. What are some of the developments envisioned? Anatomical alterations, for one thing. Mariah Robertson seems to see a sort of vegetable-human hybrid in the cards, while Claire Pentecost surmises that we'll all be reduced to walking stomachs with multiple tongues.

Sex will not disappear any time soon, judging by its prominence here, in K8 Hardy's sizzling self-advertisements, in Pradeep Dalal pictures of men popping out of Hindu temple floor plans, and in still lifes by Daphne Fitzpatrick (corn-cob-with-sneakers) and Paul Mpagi Sepuya (beefcake-with-Nina Simone).

On the fashion front, it is all about morphing. Luis Jacob and Chris Curreri push pink head-to-toe spandex bodysuits as the look of tomorrow; Julio Grinblatt designs cover-up couture with bandages.

And while Jaime Warren makes a case for electrified shoes, and Glen Fogel plugs cosmetology-as-collage, Derrick Adams goes straight for weirdo Space Age with a pyramidal Venusian-Egyptian helmet that Jack Smith, always light-years ahead of his time, and our time, would have loved.

And what about art? Is there a future in painting?

Yes, at least in paintings of mysterious airborne vehicles like the one in a city mural photographed by LaToya Ruby Frazier. And will we still be shopping? Yes, again, and there's no time like the present to start.

Why not begin at Higher Pictures? Most of the work in the show, organized by the independent curator Dean Daderko, is for sale, and pretty cheap. When some of these 50 careers hit the stratosphere, you won't be able to touch them. As every smart collector knows, the future is always now.

HOLLAND COTTER

Higher Pictures

764 Madison Avenue, near 66th Street

Through July 3

MUSEUM 52

ARTFORUM

5/24/10

GREATER NEW YORK MoMA/PS1

IF THE PLANET doesn't explode first, the Whitney Biennial, the New Museum's triennial, and MoMA PS1's "Greater New York" quintennial will coincide in the year 2030. This year, the intervals separating the three were long enough not to complicate the production logistics of artists selected for more than one, but short enough that an interested public might notice which ones were. We can congratulate Tauba Auerbach for making all three, wonder how Emily Roysdon got away with showing iterations of the same project at two, and so on. As for the curators of "Greater New York," they aimed to differentiate their opus from, of all things, an art fair. "We don't have a lot of money, but we have a lot of space," Klaus Biesenbach told the press Thursday morning. "So we can offer each artist their own room." Like Volta.

Perhaps the quintennial's greater advantage over trade shows is time—that luxurious four-month run—and Biesenbach and co-curators Connie Butler and Neville Wakefield exploited it by inviting the artists to make PS1 their second studio for the show's duration. At Thursday night's opening, Ryan McNamara, who will be taking dance lessons in the galleries, expressed hope that more people would take them up on the invitation: "I'll need someone to have lunch with." Aki Sasamoto said she planned to spend some time with her installation in the boiler room—as soon as she finishes her last five performances at the Whitney.

In all fairness, there are a few aspects that make this exhibition feel truly distinctive (and it does present a good share of underexposed artists, notably Mariah Robertson, who printed a hazy catalogue of her own photography on a hundred-foot stretch of metallic paper that spills from ceiling to floor in voluptuous folds). For one thing, it's the gayest show ever, at least among major periodic group exhibitions, where gays are always present, of course, but as "two or three tokens," as one artist put it, excluding the discreet. Quite a few revelers on the museum's patio couldn't help but comment on the pervasive queerness, from Nico Muhly's elevator music (if that sounds like a jab, it's not mine—his piece is piped into the elevator) to A.L. Steiner's wallpaper-cum-photo diary and Sharon Hayes's balloon-strewn videos of election-year protests. "I've never owned gayness like this before," Conrad Ventur said of his work, three YouTube-sourced versions of a single Shirley Bassey song projected through spinning colored crystals. The current "Greater New York" also seems like the darkest show, as in least white, of its category. Not that I tried to quantify the impression by playing guessing games with the artists' names—the exhibition's mood avoids the challenge of identity politics as much as post-identity denial; it discourages precise counts. Even renowned feminist calculator Jerry Saltz, when asked about the percentage of women artists, said: "Good . . . Seems about fortyish."

When the vernissage guests finally, reluctantly obliged security and abandoned the premises half an hour after the official 8:30 PM closing time, they moved in packs two blocks west to the unofficial after party at LIC Bar—but many retreated upon

MUSEUM 52

ARTFORUM

5/24/10

realizing that at the bar, as at PS1, alcohol abounded but food was scarce. (“They have nothing!” Biesenbach said as he exited. “I hate them.”) Inside, the din of chatter barely muzzled an amplified falsetto squeal that made Kalup Linzy wonder if his work had been smuggled from the museum to the bar’s sound system. But it was just Thursday night trivia. Once the words became discernable, I thought the questions for neighborhood know-it-alls weirdly bracketed the evening with Ben Coonley’s PowerPoint parody of the weak brainteasers aired at multiplexes before features, which had been screened earlier in PS1’s new basement cinema in anticipation of the program that would kick off there a week later. One slide posed a “structural/materialist anagram”: TREEP DIALG. “Greater New York,” another slide boasted. “A quinquennial celebration of local talent.”

MUSEUM 52



5th April 2010

Three of the four artists in this show (its title comes from a song by This Mortal Coil) are doing odd and wonderful things with photography. Oddest: Kelly Barrie, whose enormous, sensational pieces—partly representational, essentially abstract—involve drawing, photography, and digital collage in an utterly unique way. Most wonderful: Mariah Robertson, whose wild-style darkroom manipulation produces unique, eccentrically shaped color mashups that are as trippy as light shows. David Benjamin Sherry's prints look conventional only in this company; the use of garish, unnatural color can get gimmicky, but his vulgarity is entertaining and his cleverness pays off (see the perversely witty "Semen and Grapes"). Through April 10.

MUSEUM 52

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.

MUSEUM 52



November 14th 2009

MARIAH ROBERTSON I am Passions October

15 through November 14, 2009

November 9, 2009 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN- CHELSEA GALLERIES MARIAH ROBERTSON "I AM PASSIONS" In an age of flawless digital output, Robertson goes into the darkroom to produce large, messy photographs that mix geometric patterns, passages of pure abstraction, and recognizable subjects (palm fronds, book covers, male nudes). The mood is hectic, expressionist, and spontaneous—the rush of images and impressions feels like a psychedelic light show compressed onto a shard of paper. Because Robertson tends to leave her borders uneven, many pieces look like fragments of larger work, but they never feel slight or incomplete. The anything-goes spirit of chance and random juxtapositions is anchored in a sensibility that knows exactly how far to go.

Vince Aletti

MUSEUM 52

The New York Times

October 23rd 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

MUSEUM 52

NEW YORK

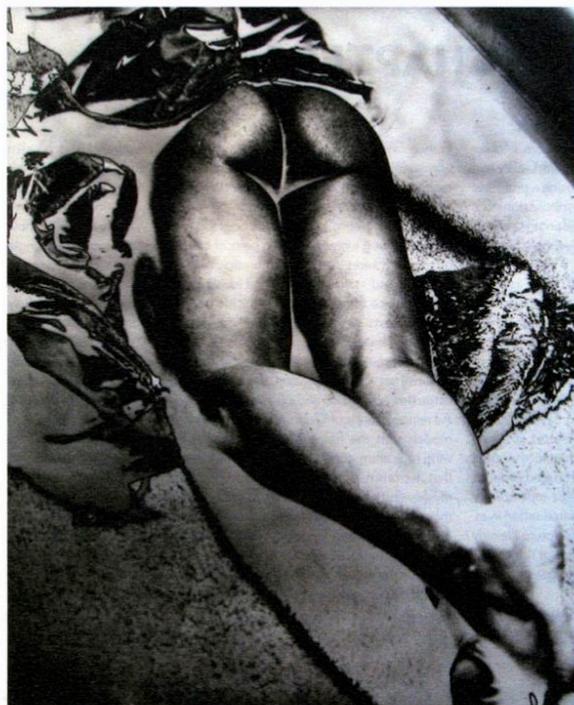
October 16th 2009

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 Pearse

REVIEWS MARIAH ROBERTSON



Untitled Nude 3, 2007, silver gelatin print, 42 x 37 cm (framed), unique print, edition of 4 + 2AP. Courtesy the artist

MARIAH ROBERTSON: NUDES, STILL LIVES, AND LANDSCAPES

GUILD & GREYSHKUL, NEW YORK
3 NOVEMBER - 8 DECEMBER

Mariah Robertson's second exhibition with New York's Guild & Greyshkul follows its title into well-trod territory, but with a few significant twists. The 30-odd black-and-white photographs ringing the front room of the gallery present their subject matter through a thick layer of interference, produced by in-camera and studio tricks like masking and photocollage. Robertson's technical retrospection and analogue proclivities suggest the ways visuality may be wanting in our digital era and, on a broader level, place her in line behind practitioners like Man Ray, who expanded the scope of the medium by playing to its margins.

Legend cites Ray as the first to explore the artistic possibilities of solarisation – a usually accidental effect, generated by the exposure of film to light during its development. Robertson also deploys this technique, suspending her subjects in a luminous purgatory and cutting their contours as if from marble. Instead of imbuing her photographs with the magical potency of Ray's portraits and nudes, however, Robertson's treatment, conjoined with the

exhibition's crowded hanging, has the effect of homogenising them. Aesthetic uniformity here appears to be a strategic move, one that forces viewers onto a terrain so semiologically dissonant and materially dense as to make genre-based interpretation seem beside the point. A solarised collage of a male rump nestled between two rather allusive wicker baskets (*Collage 9*, all works 2007), for example, can be found hanging aside a no-less-suggestive still life of pitchers (*Pitchers*) and an appropriated Queen album cover, upon which the artist has layered a hand-masked bullseye encircling her naked-cyclist alter ego (*Found Self Portrait, Modified*).

Undoubtedly there's a feminist agenda playing across these works and others in the show, from the dozen images of men's butts to the single black pedestal displaying vanitas-style tintypes of a skull and instructional text on nude photography, opened to spreads of toned female flesh. The tintypes keep watchful eye over Robertson's army of rumps, and one cannot but read a conceptual, even divine authority into the metal upon which they are printed, and the Perspex boxes that encase them. If they do offer statements of intent on behalf of the exhibition, it's that Robertson's drive to challenge the misogynistic overtones of nude photography is part-and-parcel of her willingness to poke fun at gender-based historical revisionism, all the while engaging in it. In *Collage 1*, Robertson's oversized, silhouetted hand, replete with diamond engagement ring, comically balances a male nude, while *Untitled Self Portrait 1* finds her coy smile and ample rack drawn across another nude's back and buttocks. Such cheesy, frequently pervy humour may, in some cases, be just that; but in the strongest examples from Robertson's output, a dumb joke can expose the less salient aspects of gender and eroticism simply by inviting us to just laugh it off. *Tyler Coburn*

MUSEUM 52

TOKION

NAKED AMBITION



Left to right: Mariah Robertson, *Untitled Nude (Whales Record)*, (2007) | Mariah Robertson, *Nude with Afghani Export Rug*, (2007)
Images courtesy of Guild & Greyshkul, NYC

Artist Mariah Robertson



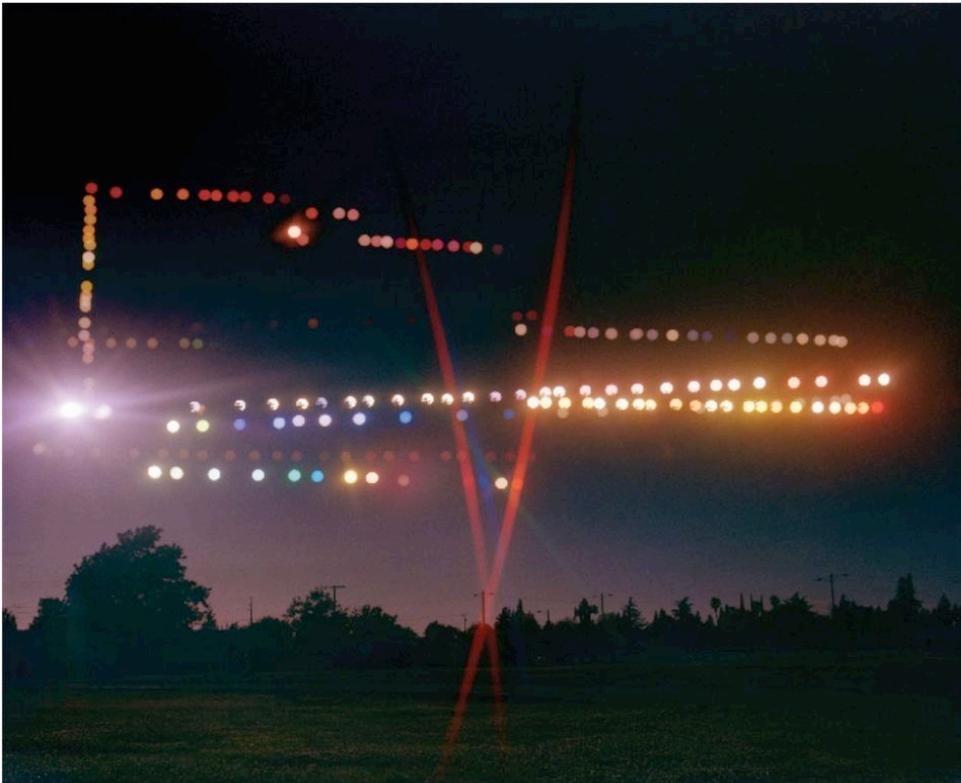
Text Cynthia Leung

A friend of mine who is the publisher of a glossy arts magazine recently remarked to me that half of his time was spent setting up interviews, the other half was spent hunting down women who were "worthy" of covering in his magazine. He's still a friend of mine, but my knee-jerk reaction was to say how archaic, how politically incorrect—how dead wrong...

One of the most affirming shows that I've recently viewed was Mariah Robertson's "Nudes, Still Lives and Landscapes" solo show at Guild & Greyshkul gallery, New York—a show that completely refuted my friend's assertion. Robertson's work proves that there are female artists who are working in an interdisciplinary fashion—perhaps too unwieldy to easily encapsulate—and who deserve a closer look. Robertson's conceptual photographs handle larger social issues like identity and feminism yet have a mischievous twinkle to them.

Viewing the work, one straddles the fence between being on the verge of bursting out laughing and also feeling a touch uncomfortable. On one hand, she presents classical images of domestic houseplants and ceramic vases. These are balanced out with carefully composed photos of buck-naked men, injecting a kind of absurd sexual energy into the mix. Robertson aspires "to have and give as much of a full-brain experience as possible," most evident in photographs such as *Nude with Afghani Export Rug*, presenting a male nude standing atop a made-for-export "ethnic" carpet filled with objects of war and rendered safe inside a domestic interior. In Robertson's strategic juxtaposition of the seemingly benign and supposedly sexual, she asks us to reconsider what is "worthy" of viewing, and what social standards are worth reconsidering.

MUSEUM 52



Mariah Robertson, *251 Suns*, 2007; digital C-print.

Cynthia Leung Talks To Mariah Robertson

*Mariah Robertson is an artist based in New York and Cynthia Leung is a freelance arts and culture writer based in New York. They recently met to discuss Robertson's show *Nudes, Still Lives, and Landscapes*, on view at Guild + Greyshkul from November 3 to December 8.*

Cynthia Leung: Your 2006 show *Please Lie Down and Take a Nap With Me in my Grave* was all color photographs, eerie because of their content: landscapes both beautiful and mundane. They read like experiments in nature photography or thoughts on suburban nature. On one hand you had dark images swimming pools, kitchen lights, and a hot pink field of palm trees; on the other hand there were exquisite "nature" images in works like *Sun Traveling Past Tree* or *Winter Solstice*. As these works are totally devoid of humans, there's a sense of melancholy. What do you hope to convey in the photographs and what do you feel "comes back" in these landscapes?

Mariah Robertson: I would say that I'm not trying to convey anything by the images themselves—that these are the few plucked from the many results generated by simple processes. These processes being "limitations," to use certain techniques and equipment that you could classify as old, antiquated, sub-professional, and importantly from the an age of extinction: films, chemistries, and equipment are being discontinued. Even Kodak stopped making black-and-white paper. Other companies like Fuji and Ilford have pledged to never stop making certain products, but it's a dire situation. It's like standing on the polar ice cap watching it melt around you.

MUSEUM 52

November/December 2007

CONVERSATIONS

CL: And the idea of an already-dead practice carries over into the title, as if photography was speaking from the grave...

MR: That was the idea when I began the "Grave Nap" series of photos. They are inspired by the "pro-sumer" level of literature, and "how-to" photography books of the 70s and 80s, a pre-Photoshop time. There is a great level of ingenuity and homemade-ness even on the part of professionals doing editorial work.

CL: You mentioned a few of the titles of these books that you were using, like *Take Better Photographs* or Kodak's *Here's How* series. They all reminded me of conceptual art titles, or even directives. There's an unintentional, deadpan humor. But the landscapes and domestic interiors that you shoot are clearly not commercial photographs, although they employ the same techniques. There's this unruly strand of personal information that comes through—like in *100 Suns*.

MR: I'm not going for psychedelic or sad, and I'm not trying to make a picture where cars look happy. I guess for the *100 Suns* piece I was thinking of a certain John Baldessari piece where he throws 4 oranges into the air with one hand and takes a photo with the other, and sees how many times the camera can catch them in a square formation. I also thought of when Gregory Crewdson told me that a fundamental of "good" photography was that you *not* take a photo of the sun at all—and I thought, what would it look like to have 100 photos of the sun, all on one piece of film? There is a part of me that's a super ego, the one that uses a kind of Cal Arts conceptual lineage, and there are parts of, say, the id that guide the projects intuitively.

CL: In your new show *Nudes, Still Lives and Landscapes*, you continue investigating erstwhile photographic techniques like solarizing, amber types, and negative collage that have fallen out of practice, even Photoshopped away.

MR: I was interested in using alternative, historical processes from photography's shadowy beginnings with Victorian chemical hobbyists in the early 19th century right up to the early 1950s, a span of time where the flower of photography bloomed so fully. I was interested in the subjectivity inherent in the passage of time. You do this with hairstyle also. The average person is usually trying to style their hair in a way that looks nice, flattering, etc. But we can look back at 14-year-old pictures and say, "Whoa, so 90s."

CL: Is the investigation of past techniques a kind of nostalgia?

MR: I suppose it's more about memories. My goal was to try to make the "now" seem a little odd, or mix the now and yesterday in a way that might provide the clarity of hindsight for the present moment. Like the tiny wetplate glass negative *Still Life with Skull and Nudes*, with the skull and the 70s naked chick book. It's 1850s technology used to picture something from a later cultural moment, and the classic vanitas element of the skull, dumbly mixed pictures of women who are probably now in their 60s, all taken right now, in what is a time of wide decline but,

for some, resurgence of outmoded processes.

CL: You collected certain kinds of objects to shoot: plants, shells, pitchers from a collection, what about the male nudes? You never see their faces, are they also collected "objects?"

MR: Ah yes, those dazzling, hypnotic creatures. Rather than objects or people, I view them more as forms. I don't mean to dehumanize them, but maybe I depersonalize them. They are friends and acquaintances. Man Ray and other historical photographers I was looking at were really into nudes: sometimes technique and subject matter go hand and hand. I used to



Mariah Robertson, *Untitled Nude with Plant*, 2007; silver gelatin print on fiber paper.

get angry about macho photo dudes who did "sexified" women books. It's often a bearded guy with his camera/phallus on the back cover, and all women inside. You can tell which one is the girlfriend because she appears more than the other models, even when she is aging and still wearing outfits that make her look unnecessarily old and out of place. But once I was talking to a male friend about it and he said, "Oh, but when I was thirteen those books saved me." And then I thought of sweet, good-hearted little boys with their tender, budding, starved sexuality, and then the books didn't seem 100 percent bad anymore. Still, I'm not trying to have a "male gaze" on these bodies or feminize them, or homoeroticize them. It's still very classical, with a potted plant and a nice carpet. I just let loose with my gaze and try to achieve an image in between any concrete interpretation.

MUSEUM 52

2006

RESURRECTION

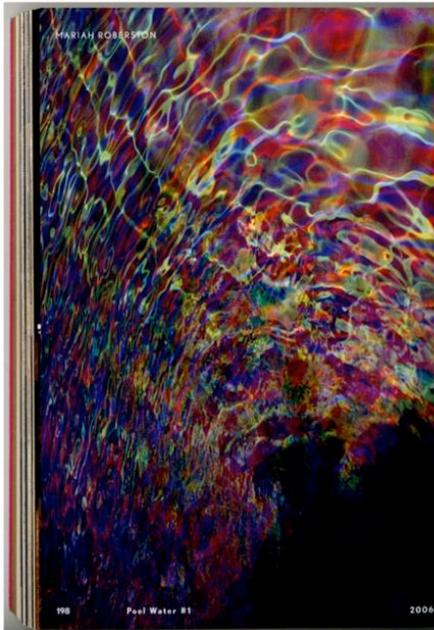
Concept: Jon Santos
Forward editor: Cynthia Leung



MARIAH ROBERTSON

Mariah likes to work within the limitations of a system, like turning lemons into lemonade. In her photos, she's wrangling with technology—the film, the filters—so that the photo is ultimately an image of the picture-making process itself. "I like to take the cheesiest filter and try to find its magic, the point at which it can transcend its own limitations. We all know that the sun moves during the day, but how often do we look up and say, 'Look, the sun's moved 3 degrees.' Did you know it moves roughly a degree every 2 minutes? Do you ever consider the sun as an abstract formal element, a circle or a sphere, tracing a slow line across the sky?" These photos are about how the camera itself sees and records images.

Continues on page 200.



MUSEUM 52

3rd December 2006

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2006 **G7**

VISUAL ARTS

GRAND ARTS | 'Haunted States'

A CRISIS OF SELF

Multimedia show explores division and dissociation.

By ALICE THORSON
The Kansas City Star

At Grand Arts, "Haunted States" is the latest in a growing number of intellectually ambitious shows by Kansas City curators.

Organized by the gallery's artistic director Stacy Switzer, "Haunted States" joins last winter's "Decelerate" at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and the ongoing "Cryptozoology" at Block Art-space as shows that take a measure of the times.

After the November elections, the country seems intent on discovering some common, middle ground. And it's none too soon, judging from the plethora of doubling, dissolving, dissociated — and desperate — images of self presented in "Haunted States."

One of the most haunting works is a video by New York artist Laurel Nakadate shot on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001. The towers have collapsed, and thick smoke rises in the background as the artist, in white shirt and denim skirt, dons a Girl Scout sash and moves about the roof of her NYC apartment building, at one point raising her arm in a salute.

Nakadate's attitude of pervasive detachment as the catastrophe unfolds behind her is reinforced by her choice of Paris Hilton's recent bubble-gum hit, "Stars Are Blind," for the video's soundtrack.

In this context, Hilton's saccharine lament for the vicissitudes of love — "You know the stars are crazy, you know the stars are blind" — turns into a commentary on the equally uncontrollable vicissitudes of hate. The two emotions become doubles, doppelgangers, like the vanished Twin Towers.

Poetic schizophrenia is a hallmark of this show, which features photographic, digital and video works by five artists working in the U.S.

The doppelganger is a mainstay of French-born Mathilde ter Heijne's video "Mathilde, Mathilde," in which the artist appears on a bridge with her identically dressed mannequin double. After a struggle, the big doll eventually lands in the water below, although it is unclear whether her fate represents an exorcism or vicarious suicide on the part of ter Heijne.

Running along the bottom of the screen, printed dialogue from 1980s and '90s French films — "My love, I'm going before your desire dies" — intimates that a relationship gone wrong set this scenario in motion. But as in Nakadate's borrowing of the Paris Hilton tune, the loss and trauma here bespeak something more existential than a simple failed romance.

In his dual-screen digital artwork, "Neither There Nor There" (2005), New York artist Siebren Versteeg portrays himself in a constant state of disintegration and reconstruction. The grainy, pulsing self-portraits we see on the two screens are actually in motion, traveling from one monitor to the other, one pixel at a time.

It epitomizes the exhibit's concern with what Switzer calls "the crisis of the self, and the crisis of representing the self to the self and the outside world."



FROM THE ARTIST

"Pool Water #2" (2006) is a photograph by Mariah Robertson. The recent Yale graduate reveals unknown dimensions in everyday scenes through her use of special effects filters and multiple exposures.

world."

Nothing is static, or as Switzer asks, "where is the sense of the person, the *there* in there?"

Chicago-based CarianaCarianne, an artist team comprising two individuals who inhabit the same body, injects a note of levity into this philosophically heavy show.

Two years ago CarianaCarianne attempted to make her dual selves official by applying to the Social Security Administration for two cards, but without success. A response on agency letterhead explained that the SSA "cannot issue a separate number to any individual who ideates separate personalities within the same body."

"Haunted States" features three videos by CarianaCarianne, including a split screen documentation of her two selves reading their last will and testament. Each in turn shares her reflections on death and reads a long list of treasured possessions and who shall have them. With its mix of legal-speak, emotional vulnerability and girly materialism, it's an absurd, but strangely touching spectacle.

In another video, "Oath of Signature," the artist's two selves utter a long string of promises relating to how each will use her signature. Their recitation has a sing-song ring, like the pledge of allegiance or a sorority initiation. Their ide-

SEE HAUNTED | G8