

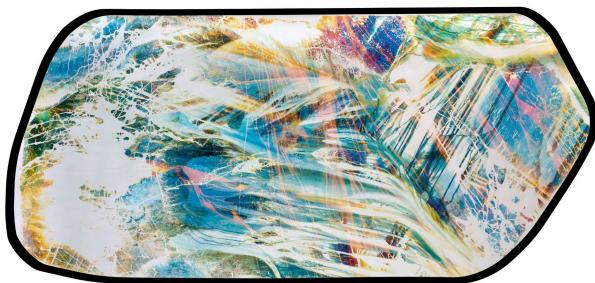
VAN DOREN WAXTER

Mariah Robertson

Everything counts & local reality

September 13 – October 28, 2023

23 East 73rd Street 2nd Floor Gallery



2016 152, 2023

Unique C-print, 34 x 72 in

Van Doren Waxter is pleased to present a striking, dazzling, site-specific exhibition of recent experimental work by Mariah Robertson. “A demon in the darkroom,” Andrea Scott in *The New Yorker* enthused, “swinging between Man Ray and Jackson Pollock,” Robertson is recognized for pushing the photographic medium with her cut and curled abstract color photograms and was recently included in the first contemporary museum survey of cameraless photography. The presentation will showcase three ongoing bodies of work by the artist, featuring her signature compound works on RA-4 paper, including a glowing, deconstructed lightbox that will be installed by the artist on the second floor of the gallery’s 1907 townhouse. The show’s title refers both to a Depeche Mode song—*Everything Counts*—and a concept in physics which was the subject of a 2022 Nobel Prize—*Local Reality*, referring to Robertson’s separate bodies of work, always running parallel without overlapping. As described in 2022 by *Scientific American*:

One of the more unsettling discoveries in the past half a century is that the universe is not locally real. In this context, “real” means that objects have definite properties independent of observation—an apple can be red even when no one is looking. “Local” means that objects can be influenced only by their surroundings and that any influence cannot travel faster than light. Investigations at the frontiers of quantum physics have found that these things cannot both be true. Instead the evidence shows that objects are not influenced solely by their surroundings, and they may also lack definite properties prior to measurement.

Multiple works from her *radical intervention* series will be included in the exhibition. The series explores the relationship between photograph and frame, with the shape of each frame interacting directly with the prints and the frame itself incorporated into the work, removing the distinction between photograph and frame.

Her second body of work, titled *the lost puzzle series*, began by happenstance in 2018 when Robertson placed together varied and disparate photographs like a puzzle to create one composite work. The works are created by holding photo paper with one hand and allowing the other hand to create a cut using gestural tears. The curved shape of each paper follows the movement of Robertson's arm through the C-paper. These works are three-dimensional and lifting off the surface of the frame.

The final body of work will be comprised of loose prints placed atop a glowing lightbox by the artist. The prints are unframed and across a lightbox installed on the floor. A dynamic intervention in the gallery, Robertson intends for the prints to interact with their environment and welcomes movement from a breeze or subtle changes in their configuration over time.

Robertson uses her whole body to unfurl, cut, mask, and spray, and in each series these work incorporate her foundational background in performance art—which Robertson attributes as much to a seminal undergraduate class she took on Temporal Structures/New Genres class (focusing on the work of Adrien Piper and Vito Acconci) as she does the weekly drag shows she attended at San Francisco's the Stud, hosted by the late Heklina. This period led Robertson to photography, which began out of a need to document her temporally fleeting performance work. On a conceptual level, Robertson performs as a photographer—making photographic prints in a darkroom with the lights on. Her works are corporeally embodied, they ask the viewer to interrogate their own making. Each works' three-dimensional form possesses an objecthood, activates space, and are subject to subtle changes over long periods of time, creating works that are thoroughly engaged with temporality.

About the artist

MARIAH ROBERTSON (b. 1975) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She was educated at Yale University (MFA) and UC Berkeley (BA). Her solo exhibitions include M+B, Los Angeles, CA (2018,2015), 11R, New York (2017,2016); and American Contemporary, NY (2013). Robertson has been included in group exhibitions at institutions such as MoMA PS1, NY; International Center of Photography NY; and Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit. Her work is included in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, NY, and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; among others.

Gallery Information

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