

Galerie



9 Emerging Artists to Discover at NADA Miami 2021

Check out the rising stars making waves at the 19th edition of the buzzy fair, which runs from December 1-4

BY PAUL LASTER

NOVEMBER 30, 2021



Hannah Whitaker, *Eyes Shut, Slit*, 2020. UV printed onto MDF with hand painted edges, 21 x 15 inches.

PHOTO: COURTESY MARINARO, NEW YORK

8. Hannah Whitaker at Marinaro

With degrees from both Bard and Yale, Hannah Whitaker has had no difficulty in getting her experimental photography exhibited in museums and galleries around the globe. Working figuratively and abstractly, her most recent body of work features a singular female model filmed using lighting techniques Whitaker acquired through jobs as a commercial photographer. Her picture *Eyes Shut, Slit* presents a silhouetted figure with a strip of red lighting her eyes while she stands before a staged sunset, optically created by gradated lights. Futuristic and robotic looking at first glance, the figure, however, maintains her humanity through the imperfection of loose hairs revealed by the light glowing from behind.

ART

Hannah Whitaker

In a new suite of highly stylized portraits at the Marinaro gallery, Whitaker departs from her previous methods of elaborate in-camera masking and multiple exposures. Instead, the photographer achieves spectacular effects—dark stripes of shadow and laserlike flares of color—by carefully staging each shot of the same female subject. Sometimes the woman appears in silhouette; other times, she emerges from shadow or is revealed in a slice of light. Her naturalistic presence seems at odds with the pictures’ stark techno-futurism, which might otherwise call for android perfection. A second intriguing series is installed in the gallery’s lower level—assemblages of jigsawed, brightly painted, photo-printed shapes are outfitted with light bulbs. These lamp sculptures recall the designs of the Memphis Group, but, arranged in a conspiratorial cluster on the floor, they are clearly more than mere décor.

—*Johanna Fateman*

Dec. 10-Jan. 24

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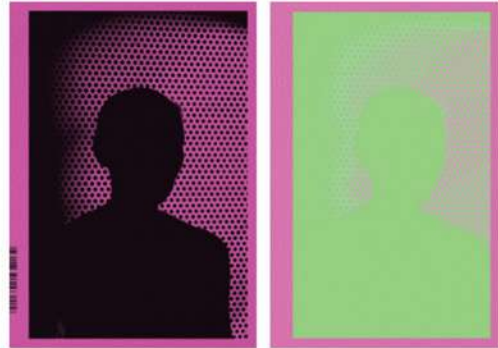




Art Books | In Conversation

HANNAH WHITAKER with Naomi Elias

Hannah Whitaker speaks with Naomi Elias on the occasion of her new photobook *Ursula*, out in 2021 from Image Text Ithaca



In her opening monologue at TechCrunch’s 2017 Annual Crunchies Awards, comedian and host Chelsea Peretti asked the room why every mainstream AI personal assistant was given a female name. “I’m surprised there isn’t just one called Mommy,” she exclaimed. Since then feminized AI assistants have only become more popular and prolific, even making their way onto television shows like NBC’s *The Good Place* where D’Arcy Carden’s Janet character, though portrayed by a woman, frequently reminds people she is neither a girl nor a person but rather a creation built in the shape of one to serve others. In her new book, *Ursula*, Brooklyn-based photographer Hannah Whitaker explores this phenomenon and considers how much modern technology and our very conceptions of the future are a product of male fantasy.

Ursula’s cover shows a silhouetted woman. Modeled by Whitaker’s close friend Karen Eydie Meléndez, she is the artist’s muse for the project; page after page Meléndez’s body is transformed with the addition of geometric shapes, lights, radiant color, celestial backdrops, and other imaginative tools from Whitaker’s studio. The photographer uses these female figures—inspired by science fiction’s genre tropes and gendered modern technology like digital servants and sex robots—to genially interrogate the ways the male gaze alternately deforms, sexualizes, and subjugates the female form. They are luminous, lively, and transparently devised with great attention to the nuanced and evolving visual language of the tech industry. Each image is crafted with confidence. Accompanying her photographs in the book are two written pieces from Dawn Chan, a former editor at *Artforum* and visiting scholar at NYU’s Center for Experimental Humanities and Social Engagement, and science fiction writer David Levine. Their pieces provide, respectively, historical context and fictive narrative shorts for the images and ideas contained in Whitaker’s portraits.

In advance of the book’s publication, I spoke to Whitaker about the project over the phone in September. We talked about the sexist histories of photography and advertising, and how she was inspired by the color of spaceships.

Elias, Naomi. “Hannah Whitaker with Naomi Elias,” *The Brooklyn Rail*, December 2020.



Hannah Whitaker, *Hold*, 2019. © Hannah Whitaker and Image Text Ithaca.

Naomi Elias (Rail): Tell me how this book came about and where the title Ursula comes from.

Hannah Whitaker: I started making the photographs before I necessarily envisioned them as a book, probably two years ago. The initial impetus for making them was interested in a return to making conventional photographs again. I had been working for many years using this really labor-intensive analog process. I still do make those photographs—I layer multiple exposures onto 4×5 film with the intervention of hand-cut masks. Through that method I create these images that are really controllable from the ground up, and I can layer different kinds of graphics onto an image while still using all optical means. The process feels very mechanical and very automated in certain ways. I have to come up with a plan and carry it out in this very rigid sort of predetermined, programmatic way. I started thinking about that process and I got really interested in the human form, specifically the female form, and I started using that form in this mechanical, repetitive way.

I also shoot a lot of commercial work and have amassed lighting skills from doing that, so I started thinking about who the figure was in my work and what her life is, or what her world is. I started using a lot of the lighting techniques from my commercial life. It was just super satisfying because it took a lot of the ideas I'd been exploring as an artist, but I got to exploit the immediacy of just making a straight photograph again, the sort of challenge and joy of a conventional shoot which I hadn't really done as a part of my work in a really long time. Returning to that sort of conventional form of picture-making was really rewarding. So I started making these pictures. They're all of this close friend of mine. I'd just kind of have her over to my studio regularly. That's kind of how the project began.

I don't know why really early on I wanted this project to be called Ursula. I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that the most famous Ursulas I can think of are all relevant to the project in certain ways. To me, the one that comes to mind first is Ursula the sea witch from *The Little Mermaid*. And so there's the villain. And then there's also Ursula K. Le Guin, who's a well-known feminist sci-fi writer, and then there's Ursula Andress, who is a sex symbol/model/actress. I felt like the triangulation of sci-fi, villainy, and sex symbol was really relevant to the project. I felt like the name Ursula is both retro and futuristic. My photographs are meant to be futuristic but they also incorporate a lot of retro visions of the future. In some ways, they embody a history of techno-futuristic design tropes. There's a wide time period that I feel is contained within them, so I feel like the name Ursula sort of goes in both directions.

Rail: What type of camera did you use for this project and did you use any other materials?

Whitaker: I used a Nikon digital SLR camera; it's a high-end professional camera. I don't know why this is important to me exactly but I feel compelled to point out that the photographs are not digital composites. What you see was constructed in the studio so the cloud backdrop, for example, is a printed cloud backdrop lit with colored gel, and she's lying on something in front of that backdrop. I did do some things digitally—I'm not claiming to have done zero work in Photoshop—but it's very minimal stuff. I didn't compose them in Photoshop. These worlds were made in my studio.

Elias, Naomi. "Hannah Whitaker with Naomi Elias," *The Brooklyn Rail*, December 2020.



Hannah Whitaker, *The Eye*, 2019. © Hannah Whitaker and Image Text Ithaca..

Rail: You have a lot of experience doing fashion/brand editorials which is a genre of photography that I feel frequently disembodies women by highlighting specific body parts like their eyes or arms. Was your approach to photographing the female body in this book more similar to how you do product photography or to traditional portrait photography?

Whitaker: I think shooting artwork as opposed to shooting for a client is just a fun, different kind of experience and assignment. When I'm shooting something, whether it's for a magazine or as a commercial assignment, I really feel cognizant that I'm doing something for hire and that there's a client involved, and that's how I make my living. So I feel like—no, I don't feel like the treatment of the body would be similar in any way. With this close friend of mine, I was directing her and she was very generously complying with whatever I wanted her to do, and there wasn't anybody to please lurking in the background of this project. It was really just getting at a certain kind of imagery that I was after. But at the same time, part of this work and part of all my work is informed by the history of photography, which includes the way that women are depicted in advertisements. In the history of photography, the woman is the traditional subject, and a man is the traditional photographer. I do feel like that's something I think about in the work certainly, and also the kind of visual language of the tech industry like those Apple ads where there's a really silhouetted figure. I think this body of work in general is done with a critical eye to the sources that I'm referring to but at the same time, it's also indulging in the same things that I'm critiquing.

Rail: A couple of years ago I came across Julie Wosk's work on what she calls "artificial Eves," the women that men manufacture, which feels like an apt term for the female forms in your book. Wosk is a professor who incorporated her knowledge of writing for *Playboy* and how women have been sexualized in advertising, and then also obviously contemporary tech, into a book. It's a very interesting read and she hits on similar themes that Dawn Chan brings up in your book.

Whitaker: Artificial Eves? Sure. I'm actually not familiar with that work. But thanks for bringing that to my attention.

Rail: In Dawn Chan's piece, she traces the genealogies of these manufactured women from the original Pygmalion myth to film adaptations, like Audrey Hepburn's Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* (1964) and ELIZA, an early chatbot named after Hepburn's character, to the present day where we're surrounded by what she calls "servile female AIs" like Alexa and Siri. Were you influenced by that history when staging your portraits or was it something you wanted people to think about while looking at the images?



Hannah Whitaker, *Arms Up, Slit*, 2019. © Hannah Whitaker and Image Text Ithaca.

Whitaker: I think both for sure. Dawn and I talked a lot about what areas of research would make sense for the book. I wasn't familiar with all of the references that she ultimately drew from, but those figures and ideas are certainly something I was thinking about in the book. I was thinking a lot about male fantasy and the sort of contemporary realization of long-imagined fantasy from sci-fi, the way that science fiction from the past 50 years has imagined all this stuff that is now suddenly possible, and how some of that emerges in the very gendered technology that we are seeing explode right now. But I also think that's not everything. The work is not all critical. It's also very playful and indulgent. Part of why I wanted Dawn and David Levine—who are both actually good friends of mine—to write is because I felt like Dawn would write something critical and smart and scathing about the world, and David would write something that kind of drinks the Kool-Aid a little bit. I felt like both were important to the project.

Rail: His piece references some pop culture imagery like the chessboard in *Alice in Wonderland* and the grid framework in the *Tron* movie and I noticed you use grids as a recurring motif in this book. What attracted you to that pattern? How did it help you tell your story?

Whitaker: Well, the grid is this powerful symbol of techno-futurism and it's something that emerged in the '80s as a part of futuristic fantasy. It's a handy and useful device. I tried not to use it too directly. My grids are sort of deformed and colored, not like your standard black and white. I didn't want the work to be placed too squarely in the '80s. I was very cognizant of not overusing the grid because of what a design trope it is.

Rail: A lot of the photos share a color gradient backdrop. Gradients were big in the '90s and have obviously become really trendy again in web design, product packaging, and even as jigsaw puzzles. Can you talk about your color palette overall for this book and what interested you in gradient transitions?

Whitaker: Oh that's so interesting that you bring up jigsaw puzzles, I hadn't thought about that. I have for many years been using a lot of gradients in my work. What's really interesting about them is the way that they're used by the tech industry to evoke a kind of confidence in a product, or cleanliness, or a kind of clarity or capableness. I think that's part of the interest in it. But there's also the sort of glow from science fiction—every spaceship has this kind of gradient light.

Rail: And you alluded to not wanting to use a lot of black and white or gray. It's a very colorful book. What's the color story you had in mind?



Hannah Whitaker, *Arms Up, Slit*, 2019. © Hannah Whitaker and Image Text Ithaca.

Whitaker: It wasn't really predetermined. I mean, I've had a lot of people come to my studio and tell me that it's sort of trashy, like not very sophisticated or elegant or something, which I don't really mind. The way we described the book when I pitched the idea was the photographs are sort of maximalist, the opposite of modernist restraint. When making them I wasn't intending for the palette to be so wild, it just came about instinctually.

Rail: Has working on this project made you look at the world or your field differently?

Whitaker: I guess working on the project has inspired me to do a fair amount of research so in that sense, it has complicated my view of some of these ideas. It's so hard to pinpoint because I've been working on this project for a couple of years now and there wasn't a single moment where I felt like it was finished and could reflect back on it. In reading and doing research, I have gained some perspective certainly. While working on this project actually, the UN issued a report about the gendering of technology and digital servants about how it's actually damaging to society and fosters damaging stereotypes towards women that have actual real-world consequences. I feel like I wouldn't necessarily have come across stuff like that if I wasn't hyper-focused on these ideas.

Contributor




Naomi Elias

is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles. Her work has appeared online and in print at a variety of publications including *New York Magazine*, *Nylon*, and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.



Visual Culture

The Women Photographers Redefining Surrealism for the 21st Century

Jacqui Palumbo Mar 19, 2020 3:13pm   

In Surrealist circles in early 20th-century Paris, artists explored the sensuality and desire of the subconscious mind. With prominent male artists at the forefront of the movement, the female form came under their gaze. Women's bodies “became the ultimate surrealist object, it was mystified, fetishized, and othered,” Izabella Scott wrote for *Artsy* in 2017. The photographers of the Surrealist movement were no exception.

Man Ray famously turned Kiki de Montparnasse's torso into a violin, while André Kertész distorted models to monstrous effect. Women photographers of the era—such as Dora Maar and Lee Miller—have often been reduced to mere muses, their own important practices ignored or overshadowed until being revisited in recent years.

Today, there is no official movement for Surrealism in photography, but many artists have picked up the torch, exploring what Sigmund Freud called “the uncanny” to render the comfort of the known world a little less recognizable.

Many women, in particular, are determining what contemporary Surrealism in photography looks like, exploring dreamlike worlds, strange juxtapositions, and futuristic concepts to comment on selfhood, wider social issues, the subconscious, and the illusory nature of the medium itself. Here are seven female photographers redefining contemporary Surrealism.

Hannah Whitaker

At first glance, Hannah Whitaker's graphic photographs appear like collages. Layering colors, shapes, images, and silhouettes, she builds her compositions skillfully, but leaves room for the slight imperfections that reveal the nature of her process.

All of Whitaker's images are created in-camera, taking multiple exposures of a single sheet of large-format film. The meticulous approach requires extensive planning: Whitaker shoots through cut paper placed inside the 4x5 camera and masks parts of the film as she goes. "If you think of every hole or section of an image as being a separate screen you can start to imagine how complicated it can be," Whitaker told *Time* in 2016. "A single sheet of film can become several days of shooting."



Whitaker's images form delightful patterns, referencing the textiles of Anni Albers or the quilters of Gee's Bend, and are often redolent of 1980s graphic design. She reveals striking silhouettes of arms, faces, legs, and breasts in works like *Dimensions* (2019) and *Five Hands 2* (2017). The exacting nature of her work is belied by its playfulness, toying with the illusory nature of the photographic surface.

ARTFORUM



Henie Onstad Art Center, Norway. Photo: Henie Onstad Kunstsenter.

January 06, 2020 at 12:29pm

INAUGURAL HENIE ONSTAD TRIENNIAL WILL LAUNCH IN FEBRUARY

Next month, the Henie Onstad Art Center in Norway will hold its first triennial for photography and new media. The exhibition will feature new work by thirty-one international artists and will fill the entire ground floor of the museum. Titled “New Visions”—a reference to László Moholy-Nagy’s theory that photography can capture the world in a manner in which the human eye cannot—

the show will run from February 20 to May 16.

“In line with the avant-garde legacy of the Henie Onstad, we are proud to present a new triennial that will showcase recent experimental developments in photography and camera-based art more generally,” said Henie Onstad curator Susanne Østby Sæther, who is collaborating with Behzad Farazollahi and Christian Tunge of Melk, an artist-run gallery in Oslo, to organize the show.

According to a release, the exhibition’s inaugural edition “foregrounds practices that acknowledge the fluctuating and networked condition of contemporary photography and society more generally, while also articulating a keen sensitivity towards the history of photography and art.”

The list of participating artists is as follows:

Morten Andenæs (Norway)
Viktoria Binshtok (Russia)
Lucas Blalock (US)
Lucile Boiron (France)
Asger Carlsen (Denmark)
Louisa Clement (Germany)
Sara Cwynar (Canada)
Ingrid Eggen (Norway)
Roe Ethridge (US)
Victoria Fu (US)
Espen Gleditsch (Norway)
Andrea Grützner (Germany)
Annette Kelm (Germany)
Nico Krijno (South Africa)
Owen Kydd (Canada)
B. Ingrid Olson (US)
Linn Pedersen (Norway)
Matt Rich (US)
Erin M. Riley (US)

“Inaugural Henie Onstad Triennial will Launch in February,”
Artforum, January 2020.

Maya Rochat (Switzerland)
Johan Rosenmunthe (Denmark)
Torbjørn Rødland (Norway)
Viviane Sassen (Netherlands)
Paul Mpagi Sepuya (US)
Timur Si-Qin (Germany)
Wolfgang Tillmans (Germany)
Sara VanDerBeek (US)
Hannah Whitaker (US)
Carmen Winant (US)
Letha Wilson (US)
Daisuke Yokota (Japan)

“Inaugural Henie Onstad Triennial will Launch in February,”
Artforum, January 2020.

PORTFOLIO

A. Stefano Marchionini

Stefano Marchionini est un photographe italien né en 1985. Il vit actuellement à Marseille. Après avoir étudié la peinture aux Beaux-arts de Venise, il est diplômé en 2014 de l'ENSBA de Paris. Il a notamment collaboré aux magazines *Dazed & Confused*, *Waterfall* ou *Fantastic Man*.

Sélection : Louis Garçon

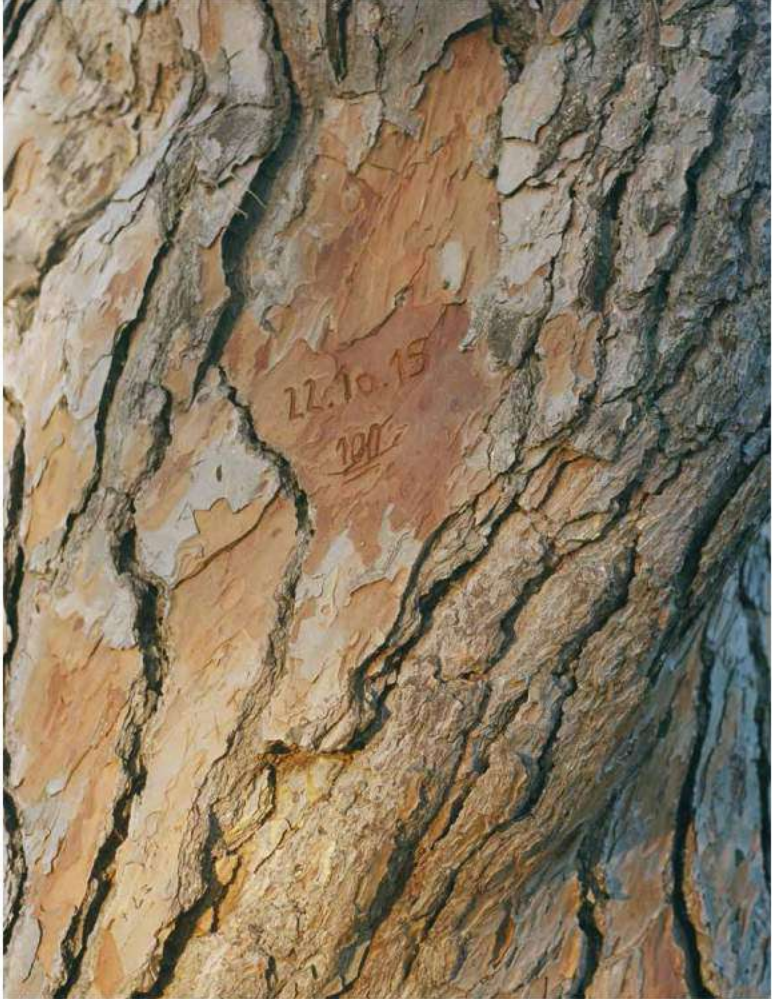
B. Hannah Whitaker

« Je m'intéresse de l'histoire informatique et de la culture numérique, mais j'ai recours à la photographie analogique. Mes images, dont le graphisme est inspiré des premiers logiciels de traitement, montrent des gestes de la main binaires, d'approbation et de refus.

Ce sont des photographies créées par une superposition de prises de vue, sur le même négatif A4, shootées à travers des masques en papier découpés à la main. Ici, chaque image est une couche habituellement invisible et déconstruit une seule et même photographie (non moétrée). C'est un travail à rebours. »

Sélection : Alain Berland

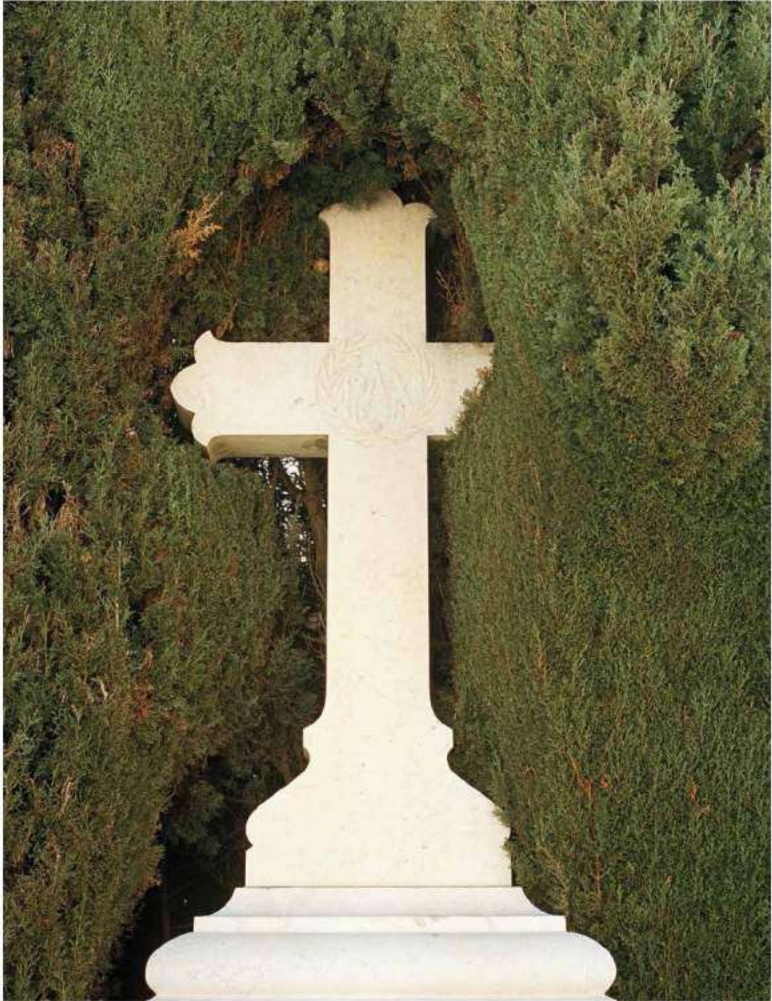




Berland, Alain. "Portfolio" *Mouvement*, September 2017.



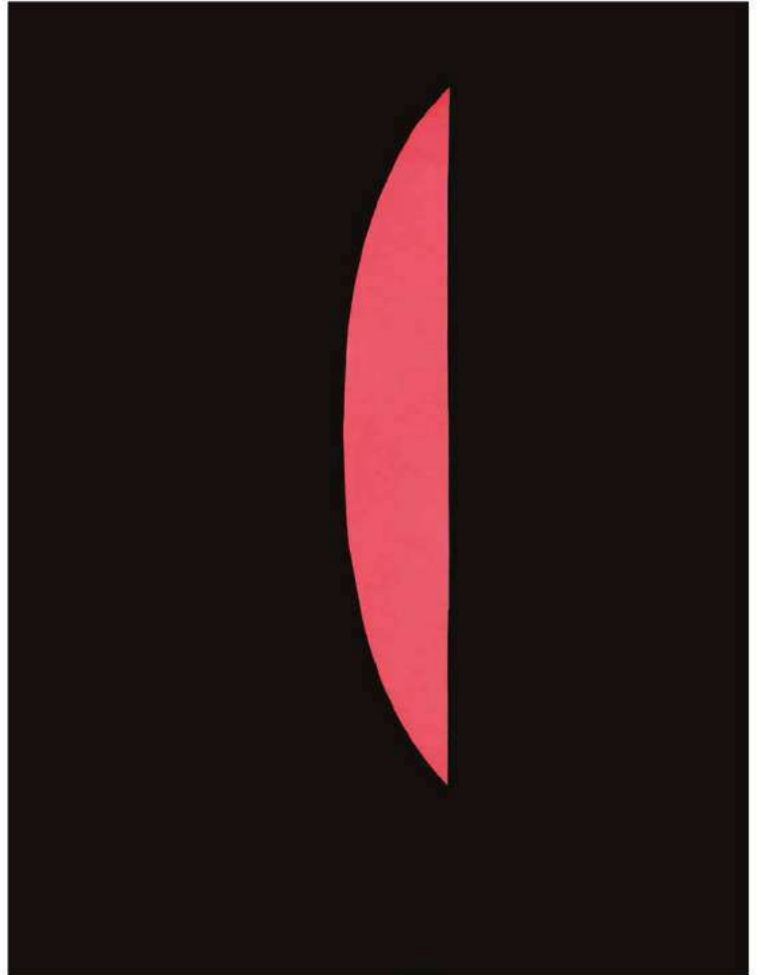
Berland, Alain. "Portfolio" *Mouvement*, September 2017.

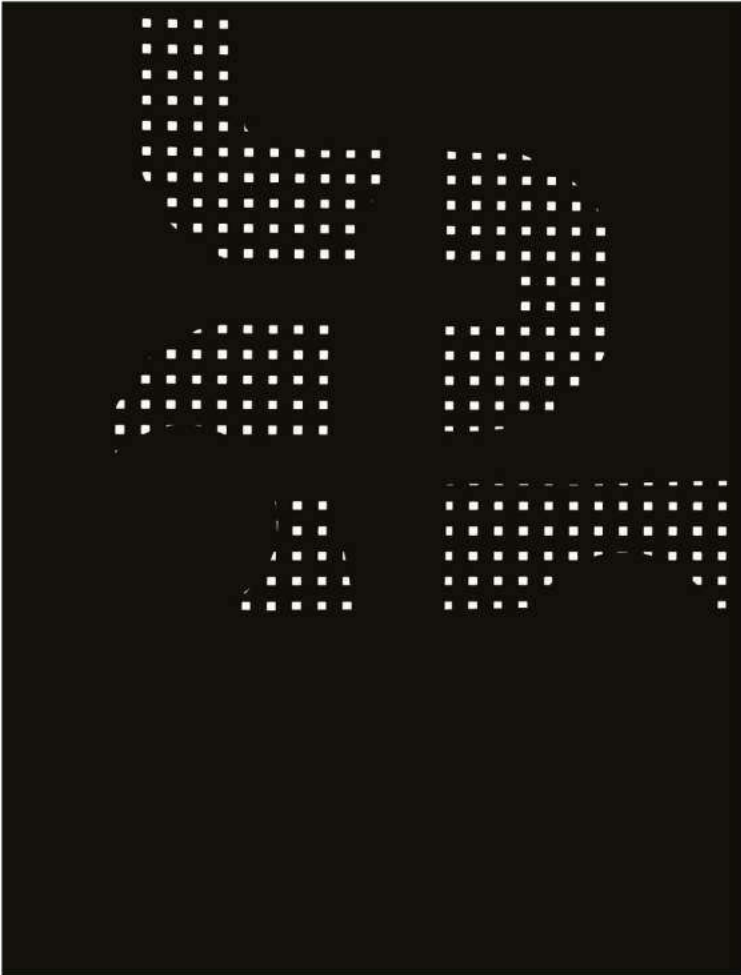


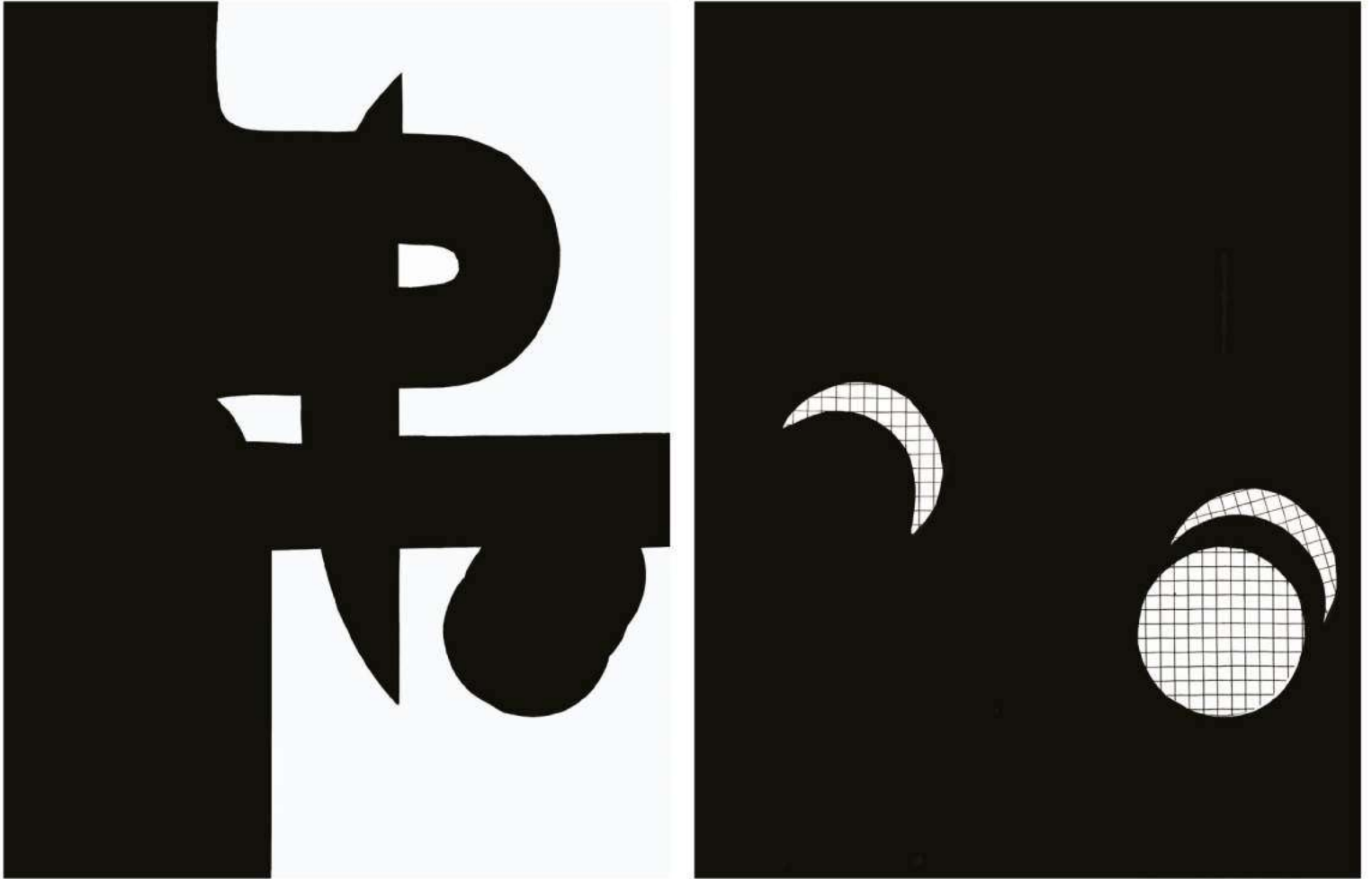
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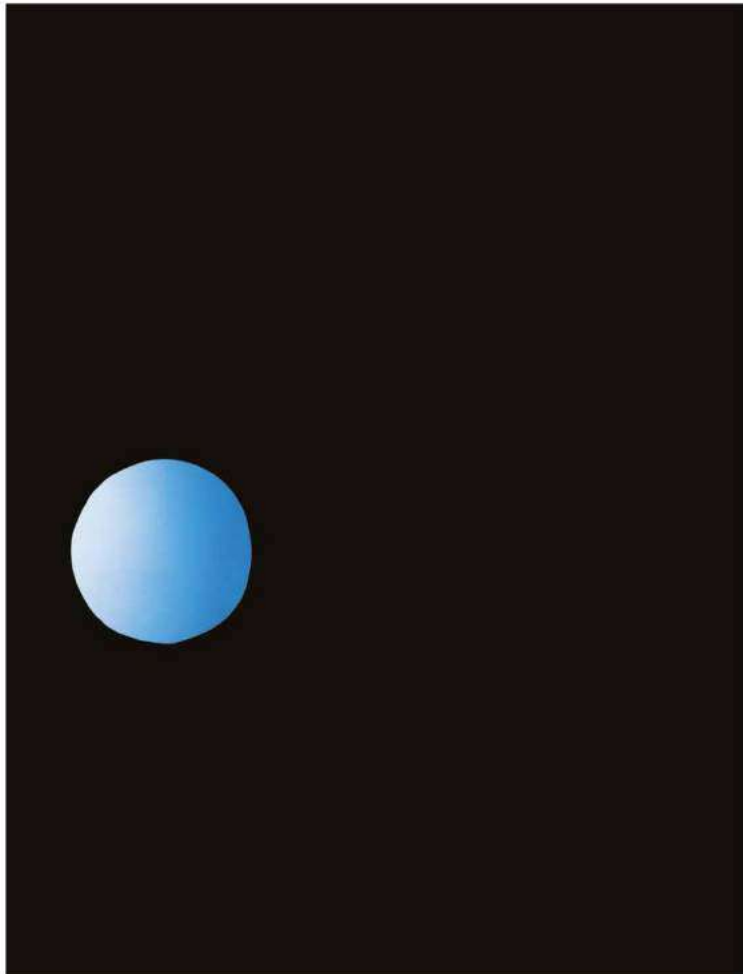


Berland, Alain. "Portfolio" *Mouvement*, September 2017.









Berland, Alain. "Portfolio" *Mouvement*, September 2017.

Hannah Whitaker

Interview by Frédéric Caillard, April 2017

Hannah, can you please describe in your own words your practice & your work?

Even though they might look not traditional, I actually do make traditional photographs in the sense that they're made through purely optical means. I shoot with a view camera onto 4x5 sheet-film. The photographs are exposed repeatedly onto the same sheet of film, and each exposure is shot through a handmade screen. Each of the screens are conceived as a part of a set, which all go into the making of just one photograph.

Where do you physically put the screens?

The screens are pressed up against the film inside the holder, which is how they can create a hard edge. If they were in any other position, the edge would be fuzzy.

And what about your subject matter?

I often combine a limited set of subjects in a given photograph: silhouetted bodies; blocks of colors, which are out-of-focus sheets of colored paper; and black and white objects, like metal grates or blinds.

American, b. 1980 in Washington, D.C., based in New York, NY.

At first glance, Hannah Whitaker's photographs might seem like they are the product of cut and paste Photoshop collage, but she creates her images entirely in camera, favoring analogue experimentation to digital manipulation. In her new body of work, instead of deconstructing existing images, she mixes the conventions of photography and abstract art with silhouettes, geometric shapes and colors that play with the ideas of handmade and automated processes.

Hannah holds a MFA from The International Center of Photography and a BA from Yale University.

"I asked myself how to automate a photograph, how to remove the artist's expressive voice as much as possible"

Your work seems to be moving away from classical photography. A few years ago your compositions included recognizable landscapes or full bodies, and you used effects that are quite widespread like light reflections. In your last few shows, colors are getting flatter and body parts are mainly reduced to their shape.

Yes, definitely. My work has evolved over the past few years to become more mechanical looking. Part of that has to do with an interest I developed over the years in forms of automation, the history of computing, and in a screen-based visual culture. I ask myself how to automate a photograph, or how to remove the artist's expressive voice as much as possible, and if it is possible to program a photograph as one does a computer. Photography is already an art form dependent on a machine. For me, once the initial idea is conceived and the visual schematic is thought through, the process becomes very automatic. Making a photograph requires painstaking execution and recordkeeping - a kind of automated system takes over. I have a coding system to keep track of which screens I have already exposed onto which sheets of film. There is very little room for spontaneous expression.



Hannah Whitaker, *Stride 1*, 2016 / archival pigment print / 128 x 102 cm / edition of 3 ex + 2 AP.
© Hannah Whitaker, Courtesy Galerie Christophe Gaillard.

Hannah Whitaker prepared geometrical cut-out screens to mask her analogic 4x5 film before shooting each section of *Stride 1*. She exposed the same film numerous times and mixed colored surfaces and desexualized female body parts as elements of this hybrid composition.

In the literature about your work, there are many references to early abstraction masters, like Matisse, Arp or Anni Albers.

A lot of people bring up Matisse to me, but that is not an association that I would offer. I do love Matisse but he doesn't directly influence my work. I think one reason that people bring him up is because of his cut-outs. I am also applying blade to paper in making my screens but to a

"Bodies in my photographs are very desexualized"

very different end. Matisse's cut-outs are very elegantly representational, and mine are resolutely not representational - they provide the armature for the content. I am dealing with an inherently representational medium and I am allowing the photographic process to do that representing for me.

In *Stride 1* the window shape of Matisse is referenced as well. I also see some formal similarities between your work and the work of Peter Klasen, from the narrative figuration movement, even though the works are very different in the atmosphere they convey.

I agree that the resulting effect is very different. One of the primary differences is that the bodies in my photographs are very desexualized. Even though they are clearly female body parts, which you could think of as highly sexually charged territory, I make it a point to present my bodies in this very deadpan, very flat way. Just from the work of Peter Klasen I am seeing here, it looks like he is employing the female figure very similarly to how you might see it in advertising.



Hannah Whitaker, *Verbs*, exhibition view.
Courtesy Galerie Christophe Gaillard, Photo: Rebecca Fanuele.

On top of being desexualized, the body parts in your work are shaded, inaccessible, often hidden behind shapes or patterns. Why is that?

It is a visual language that I have developed. I didn't always photograph bodies this way and I am sure I won't permanently. For the time being I am interested in being able to reduce a human form to a graphic system that has a lot of associations. It makes me think about clip art and highly reduced semiotic forms like Emojis. The bodies are deployed in this repetitious manner to refer back to the histories of automation and computation that inform its making. I also think it is interesting in an intuitive sense to see these hard edge forms butt up against what is recognizable as a human form. As far removed that I get from a conventional photographic process, I still think the photographic detail that is provided by a 4x5 negative can be really powerful. For example I shot some works recently where the body was wearing black tights and when I got the film back the forms were perfectly silhouetted. You could not see any details on her feet or legs: no skin, no hair, no veins. Even though the photographs took me weeks to make, I had to start over and reshoot them all with bare legs. Seeing these human details is an essential part of the experience of looking at the resulting photographs.

I am not sure that people who only see your work on the internet can realize this.

Everyone says this about their work, but when you see the work in person it looks pretty different than how it looks in jpeg form. This is why I make the prints large enough to actually experience those photographic details. When you look at the work in jpeg form, the forms become so reduced that they become almost indistinguishable from their source imagery. That tension between the elegance of photographic representation and the crudeness of a jagged cut on paper is lost.

Can you tell us about your future projects or about new directions that your work is taking?

One of the newer aspects of the work in a recent show is the introduction of seemingly spontaneous scribbling. The photographs have more wavy lines and organic forms than I had been using before. The process is the same as before, so this purported looseness is only an image of looseness. The forms are as painstakingly preplanned and repeatedly redrawn (in the making of the screens) as in the previous work. Conceptually I likened it to the automated voice that you get when you call a customer service line, how that voice has these preset mistakes, they say *oh*, or make strange vocal flourishes, or use idioms that make them sound more human. But ultimately their responses are all programmed and that spontaneity is a total façade. ■

Selected recent exhibitions

Live Agent, M+B, Los Angeles, 2017

Verbs, Galerie Christophe Gaillard, Paris, 2016

Metamorphosis – H. Whitaker, R. van Beek, J. Cockburn, Flowers, London, 2015

Cold Wave, M+B, Los Angeles, 2014

Limonene, Locust Projects, Miami, FL, 2013

Les Rencontres d'Arles, Discovery Award, Arles, France, 2012



PHOTOGRAPHIE

Brocante. Ces samedi et dimanche, au centre de la commune de Bièvres (Essonne), se tient la Foire du marché de l'occasion et des antiquités photographiques, avec expositions (dont celles de Claude et John Batho), animations et conférences... La nouveauté 2016 est la création d'un «pôle procédés alternatifs», avec un atelier de cyanotype et Van Dyke, une démonstration de tirage au papier salé et la réalisation d'un sténopé. PHOTO DR

IMAGES/

Art/ «Verbs», feuilles, ciseaux



Hannah Whitaker, *Profile*, 2016. PHOTO REBECCA FANUELE COURTESY GALERIE CHRISTOPHE GAILLARD

En jouant avec des négatifs et des masques en papier, Hannah Whitaker marie habilement formes et couleurs dans des harmonies à la Matisse.

On oublie souvent à quel point photographie et peinture sont intimes. Hannah Whitaker et sa dernière

série, *Verbs*, sont là pour nous le rappeler. Sur les murs blancs du nouvel espace de la galerie Christophe Gaillard, des compositions géométriques conjuguent couleurs et formes à l'imparfait. C'est beau, chatoyant et légèrement hésitant, comme l'écriture d'un enfant. Triangles bleus et rouges, disques verts, croissants orange, rectangles jaunes et pavés bleus, la partition abstraite de Hannah Whitaker chante la lumière et la volupté des

couleurs. Des silhouettes féminines ponctuent les portées.

«**Jeu d'enfant.**» Comment ne pas penser à Henri Matisse et à son album *Jazz*? On retrouve là les harmonies du peintre fauve créées à partir de papiers gouachés et découpés aux ciseaux. Immobilisé par la maladie, Matisse avait trouvé ce subterfuge pour réconcilier forme et couleur sans se fatiguer. Comme lui, Hannah Whit-

ker - en pleine forme, elle - jongle avec des papiers. Pour cette série de dix-huit clichés, elle a travaillé dur, près de cinq mois, chaque photo étant le résultat d'une longue élaboration en studio.

«*J'utilise un seul négatif de format 4 x 5 que j'expose plusieurs fois grâce à des masques. Ce négatif subit parfois une trentaine d'expositions et peut rester pendant plusieurs semaines dans le boîtier de l'appareil. On voit les erreurs car mes masques*

sont en papiers découpés. C'est un processus imparfait.» Femme délicate de 35 ans, à Paris pour sa seconde exposition en six mois, Hannah Whitaker compare sa technique photographique à la sérigraphie. Elle fait des dessins de prévisualisation avant de se lancer dans ce travail manuel, ravie à l'idée de pouvoir manipuler un négatif grand comme une main. «*Finalement, mon travail est comme un jeu d'enfant. Les matières sont toutes simples, ce sont des papiers colorés et du film.*» Elle reconnaît le niveau de précision technique que requièrent ses compositions, bien qu'elle tende à minimiser son travail. «*Tout est fait à l'aveugle jusqu'au développement du film. Des surprises naissent. Je prends cela comme une sorte de lutte entre contrôle et perte de contrôle.*»

Si tout est prévisualisé à l'avance, il s'agit d'un procédé argentique lourd, difficile à maîtriser. «*C'est un affrontement entre le contrôle de ce procédé et ce procédé qui me contrôle, moi.*» Contre toute attente, il y a dans *Verbs* une joute avec le mystère de la chambre noire.

Jacquard. Américaine née en 1980, Hannah Whitaker a habité à Paris. C'est à l'université Yale qu'elle a appris à utiliser la chambre 4 x 5, qu'elle n'a pas quittée depuis. Ancienne élève du Centre international de la photogra-

phie (ICP) de New York, elle a été remarquée aux Rencontres d'Arles, où elle a reçu le prix Découvertes en 2012. Aujourd'hui, elle ne fait pas un dogme de l'argentique. Pourtant, il y a un aspect *low-tech* à ses figures esthétiques et scientifiques qui évoquent les techniques de tissage à l'ancienne, comme le jacquard et les vieux ordinateurs. «*J'aime les couleurs malhabiles et inélégantes de MacPaint, les langages visuels d'apparence simplifiée.*»

Pré-pop. Admiratrice de Jean Arp et Ellsworth Kelly, Whitaker s'inspire aussi du design textile moderniste, celui d'Anni Albers. Mais pour cette exposition, elle s'est penchée sur l'histoire de Patrick Henry Bruce. Peintre malheureux, soutenu par Matisse, il a fini par se suicider. Ses amis l'appelaient «*un homme parfait trop parfait.*» La photographe souhaitait intituler ainsi son travail en hommage à ce peintre cubiste aux natures mortes pré-pop. Au fond, qu'y a-t-il de purement photographique dans tout ceci? Une transparence, une matière translucide inédite, qui évoque des vitraux anciens et ultra contemporains.

CLÉMENTINE MERCIER

VERBS
de HANNAH WHITAKER
Jusqu'au 18 juin,
à la galerie Christophe
Gaillard, 75 003.

frieze

Construction Sight

PHOTOGRAPHY

How a generation of artists is re-ordering the building blocks of photography



Schuman, Aaron. "Construction Sight," *Frieze*, April 2015.

Noémie Goudal, *Observatoire VIII* (Observatory VIII), 2014, Lambda print on Baryta paper, 1.5 × 1.2 m. Courtesy: the artist, Edel Assanti, London, and Galerie des Filles du Calvaire, Paris

Given the shape-shifting flexibility images have acquired in the digital age, photographic content should have gained prominence over photographic form. Indeed, as photographs migrate with ever-greater ease from the camera to the screen, to the internet, to print, to the increasingly relevant photo-book and to mass-media outlets, their physical properties fluctuate. So much so that many artists working with photography are focusing less on how a photograph is made than why.

For these artists, photography is defined more as a medium in the most fundamental and intangible sense of the word – as a means by which something is communicated or expressed – rather than as a singular object or substance in its own right. But a number of young artists in recent years have been countering this definition. As the artist and writer Chris Wiley noted in his essay ‘Depth of Focus’ (published in *frieze* in late 2011), they are choosing to foreground the formerly ‘repressed’ aspects of the medium – ‘the physical support upon which the image is registered, myriad chemical and technical processes, as well as the numerous choices that were made by the photographer in capturing the image’. These artists were born in the late 1970s and early-’80s and were the last to be educated primarily in darkrooms and photographic studios, spellbound early on by the alchemical magic and intimate physical connection to the photograph that these environments provided. They were also the first to mature alongside a rapidly evolving and increasingly ethereal digital medium, which has rendered the darkroom – along with nearly all of the analogue machines, methods and materials associated with it – practically obsolete.

A remarkable shift has occurred in the years since the publication of Wiley’s text. Many of the artists he cited – including Michele Abeles, Walead Beshty, Lucas Blalock and Mariah Robertson – have become increasingly visible and fluent in this new-found language. In tandem, many of the recent discussions within both art and photographic circles have revolved around photography’s formal properties, material processes and technical histories. A growing number of artists working with photography are successfully countering both the deconstructionist tendencies of 20th-century postmodernism and the increasing ubiquity of digital imagery. Loosely gathered under the banner of ‘constructed photography’, their work makes the scaffolding of the photographic medium

Schuman, Aaron. “Construction Sight,” *Frieze*, April 2015.

explicit and intricate. In so doing, it is re-establishing and, as the term implies, re-building photography as both a technical endeavour and a physical medium.



Chris Wiley, *Dingbat (12)*, 2014, archival inkjet print mounted on aluminium; artist frame with faux ostrich leather, 106 × 71 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York

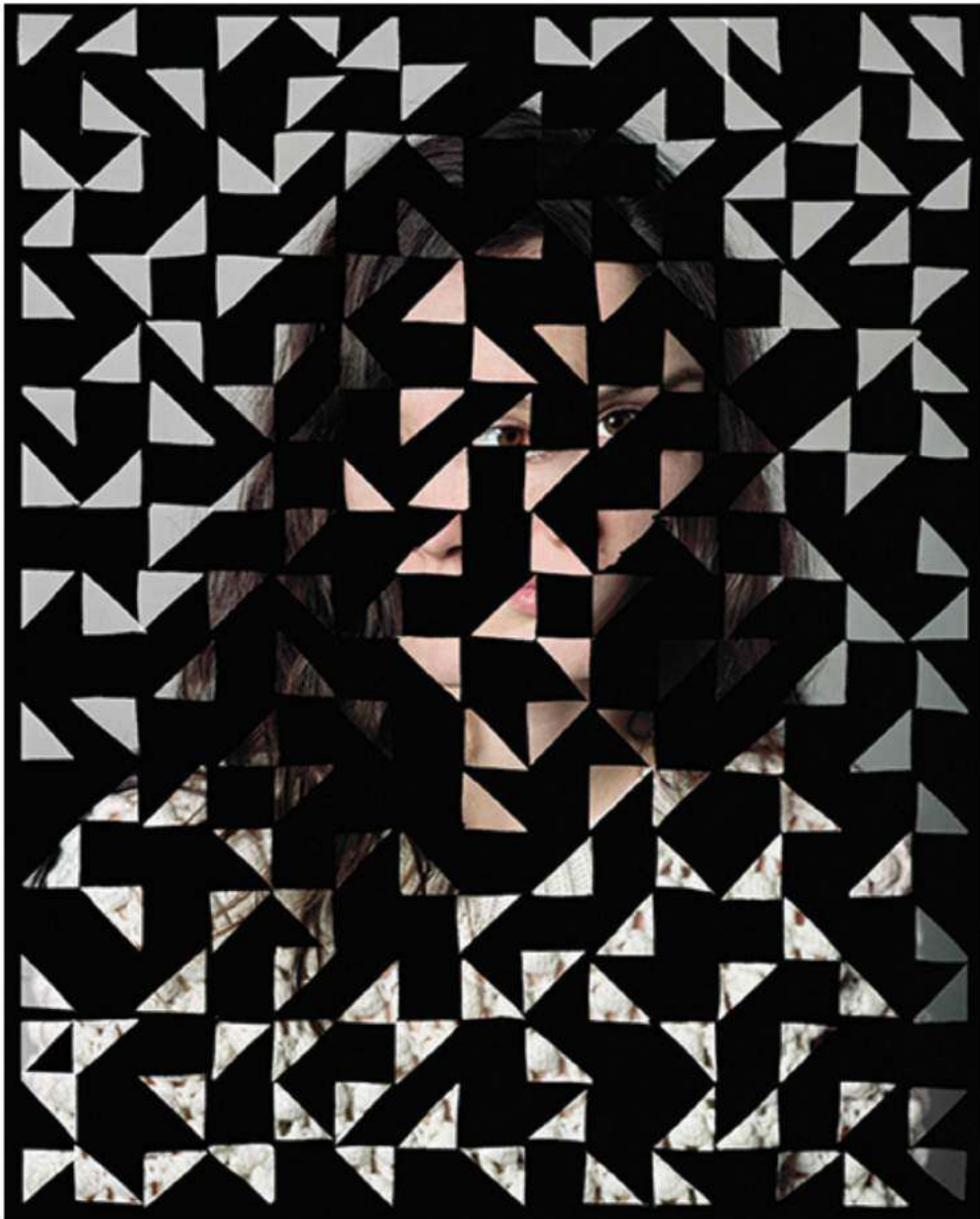
But with this emphasis on photographic form, certain fundamental structures upon which the medium is built – and which these constructions still contain – have perhaps been obscured. Several exhibitions in 2014 – including ‘What is a

Schuman, Aaron. “Construction Sight,” *Frieze*, April 2015.

Photograph?’ at the International Center of Photography, ‘Fixed Variable’ at Hauser & Wirth New York and ‘Under Construction’ at Amsterdam’s Foam Photography Museum, amongst others – centred upon formal and material concerns to such an extent that content outside of these aspects was often rendered secondary or even superfluous; so much so that the introduction to ‘Fixed Variable’ confidently stated: ‘These works are not about the content of the photograph.’

In the face of a dominant digital culture, it is certainly valid to recognize and reassert the formal potential of the photographic medium. But, no matter how introspective, process-driven or structurally focused it is, photography is foremost a medium based on seeing; it is always about content, even if that content is photography itself.

Looking at the latest output of some of the contemporary artists working with constructed photography, it becomes apparent that their content is not arbitrary; rather, it is often precisely what determines its form. Furthermore, much of these artists’ work continues to reflect upon traditions established within the medium long ago. It remains a ‘window onto the world’, albeit one that explicitly calls attention to the window-frame itself, and often bears partially obscured, shattered, distorted, stained or digitally etched – rather than transparent – glass.



Hannah Whitaker, *Portrait with Sweater (Albers)*, 2014, archival pigment print, 64 × 51 cm.
Courtesy: M+B, Los Angeles

Wiley's own recent series, 'Dingbats' (2013–14), comprises frames made of materials ranging from faux ostrich leather to seashells to carpeting to corrugated steel. Within these frames are elegantly abstracted, closely cropped images of various urban corners, surfaces and architectural details found throughout Los Angeles. The framing, in fact, complements and powerfully emphasizes the photographs' potent textural qualities, as well as their rigorous compositions. The matte tactility of the faux ostrich leather frame that surrounds *Dingbat*

Schuman, Aaron. "Construction Sight," *Frieze*, April 2015.

(12) (2014), for example, is not simply an ostentatious gesture; it emphasizes the rough finish of the sun-drenched red stucco, concrete and chipboard seen within the image, and intensifies its glistening redness to almost blinding levels. Reminiscent of canonical works by figures such as Paul Strand and Minor White, 'Dingbats' is a concentrated meditation on how physical spaces can be creatively seen and lyrically constructed within the photographic frame – aspects amplified by the eccentric framing.



Daniel Gordon, *Skull and Seashells*, 2014, c-type print, 1.5 × 1.7 m. Courtesy: the artist and Wallspace, New York

Hannah Whitaker's 'Cold Wave' (2014), an exhibition held at Los Angeles's M+B gallery, was inspired by the logician Kurt Gödel's notions of incompleteness and unknowability. Here, Whitaker presented works that used hand-cut geometric interruptions in the film plane to prismatic and kaleidoscopic effect, transforming a selection of landscapes, portraits and still lifes into complex and disorientating structures. Her idiosyncratic, yet seemingly systematic, processes are certainly foregrounded, complicating the conventionally straight photographic images that underpin them. A snowy wood at dusk is filtered

Schuman, Aaron. "Construction Sight," *Frieze*, April 2015.

through a cut-paper illusion of stacked cubes (*Artic Landscape (Pink Sky)*, 2014); a serene portrait of a young woman in an intricately woven, woollen jumper is scattered into an irregular pattern of small rough triangles (*Portrait with Sweater (Albers)*, 2014). But, rather than entirely obscuring or abstracting the view, Whitaker draws our eye ever-deeper into her richly detailed works via the picture plane itself. Recognizing the photographic material at their core, we instinctually attempt to piece together the dispersed, but not entirely disparate, parts – eager to make sense of these visual puzzles.

Similarly, Daniel Gordon's series of still lifes, exhibited in 'Screen Selections and Still Lives' at Wallspace gallery in New York in 2014, determinedly rejects the transparency and clarity of the traditional picture plane. But rather than interrupting the structure of the images via the camera or print itself, Gordon borrows photographs from the internet and digitally manipulates, enhances, repeats and prints them. He then builds elaborate studio sets out of them, which echo traditional still-life compositions, and ultimately photographs the sets themselves to create a dizzyingly multilayered yet singular image. The works explicitly reference the painterly approaches of Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso (amongst others), in which classical perspective and realism are ignored and relationships between objects take precedence. Yet, because Gordon has originally culled each element from an ever-growing online archive of digital images, his is a new vision of our contemporary visual landscape: one in which photographic representations, rather than objects themselves, are the subject of composition and contemplation; one where images have become symbiotic with, rather than symbolic of, the physical world itself.



Matt Lipps, *Art*, 2013, from the series 'Library', 2013–14, c-type print, 1.8 × 1.2 m. Courtesy: the artist, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco, Josh Lilley Gallery, London, and Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles

Schuman, Aaron. "Construction Sight," *Frieze*, April 2015.

Artists such as Sara Cwynar and Matt Lipps also use pre-existing photographic imagery in their work, but they gather it from pre-digital sources that reference analogue photography. Lipps's series 'Library' (2013–14) draws from the 17-volume set of books published by Time-Life in the early 1970s, *Library of Photography*, which once served as a practical and historical guide to the medium. Lipps takes images featured in these educational publications and turns them into small, cardboard cut-out totems or souvenirs of photography's past – which he then places on shelves within a photographic cabinet of curiosities lined with colour-toned images from his own back catalogue. 'Library' exhibits the ways in which photography was once taught and understood, and how the world at large was once categorized within the confines of photography.

Similarly, Cwynar's interest lies primarily in dated darkroom manuals and pre-digital commercial photographic culture. In her series 'Flat Death' (2014) she applies forms of collage, sculptural construction, re-photography and manipulation to images that once served to glamourize and fetishize what they depicted. Mid-20th-century stock images, such as that seen in *Display Stand No. 64 cons h. 8 ¼" w. 24" D. 16 ½"*, featuring a shop display of breath mints and chewing gum, are dismantled and then refreshed through Cwynar's various processes. These highlight the antiquated trickery, waning effect and underlying banality of the images and, at the same time, accentuate their renewed contemporary value as forms of vintage curiosity and kitsch. Both Cwynar and Lipps make their methods explicit, yet the subjects within each work – in these particular cases, photographs themselves – are what captivate us.



Sara Cwynar, *Display Stand No. 64* H. 8 1/4" W. 24" D. 16 1/2", 2014, chromogenic print, 76 × 91 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Foxy Production, New York

Rather than addressing particular histories, Asger Carlsen’s ‘Hester’ (2011–12) and Noémie Goudal’s ‘Observatoires’ (Observatories, 2013–14) take on the familiar photographic tropes of the female nude and architectural typology, respectively. Both artists apply contemporary techniques to well-worn territories in a bid to reinvigorate them. Carlsen’s deformed, excessively limbed and headless nude bodies – created entirely on screen but bearing the influence of artists such as Hans Bellmer – take full advantage of photography’s digital flexibility and seamlessness. Carlsen’s manipulation is so upfront and extreme that it’s impossible to ignore – and yet the raw, physical presence of these figures is powerful enough to introduce an entirely new photographic perspective on the human form. Goudal also invents realistic yet fictional photographic constructions through the amalgamation of existing ones – in her case, by digitally aggregating fragments from images of concrete architecture found throughout Europe. She then reworks them into large-scale photographic backdrops that she re-photographs within barren landscapes or seascapes. The series reflects the influence of Bernd and Hilla Becher, yet catalogues a group of

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imagined rather than real post-industrial architectural monuments, which nevertheless convey a sense of rigour, purposefulness and stature.



Asger Carlsen from the series 'Hester', 2012, pigment print, 50 × 70 cm. Courtesy: the artist and V1 Gallery, Copenhagen

Lorenzo Vitturi's cycle of work, 'Dalston Anatomy' (2013), is an evocative exploration of London's Ridley Road Market, an area threatened with rapid

Schuman, Aaron. "Construction Sight," *Frieze*, April 2015.

gentrification. Vitturi attempts to preserve the spirit of the market and the neighbourhood by redefining the role of the traditional photographic documentarian. In making this series, Vitturi not only photographed on site in a traditional documentary manner, but also brought debris from the market into his nearby studio to create precarious and exotically imaginative sculptures and intricate collages, which he then re-photographed. Small towers of artificial flowers, hair extensions, potatoes, pig's trotters and powdery pigments are held together in a slapdash manner by long nails, strings and skewers; photographic portraits of market-goers are littered with, and obscured by, colourful dust and detritus that chimes with their outfits. Blatantly manhandled and multilayered, 'Dalston Anatomy' places the emphasis on its own making, but the content of these pictures also indicates a profound desire to commune with and communicate the world outside of the limits of photographic production. As Vitturi explained in a 2013 interview: 'These images [...] were not just simply the result of my secret imagination, but were, in fact, deeply connected with a wider reality.'



Lorenzo Vitturi, *Yellow Chalk #1*, 2013, from the series 'Dalston Anatomy', archival pigment print mounted on aluminium with coloured wood subframe, 1 × 1.5 m. Courtesy: the artist and Yossi Milo Gallery, New York

Schuman, Aaron. "Construction Sight," *Frieze*, April 2015.

Edward Weston – the celebrated practitioner and champion of photography as a distinct art form – wrote in his 1943 essay ‘Seeing Photographically’: ‘The photographer’s most important and likewise most difficult task is not learning to manage his camera, or to develop, or to print. It is *learning to see photographically*.’ By contorting, Twister-like, across the realms of the darkroom and the studio, the analogue and the digital, the artistic and the vernacular, and the historical and contemporary, these artists collectively reflect the seismic changes that have occurred within photography, and culture at large, during the rise of their generation. Keeping up with revolutionary shifts in technology, they have had to learn and then relearn their medium over and over again and, in so doing, are experimenting with, and stretching the reach of, its processes and properties. But in creating work that blatantly bears the marks of its making, and wears its structural form like an exoskeleton, they have also cleverly established new ways in which the content at photography’s core can be represented and understood. In renovating and rebuilding photographic form, they are also constructing new ways to see, and to learn to see, photographically.

Aaron Schuman

is an artist, writer and curator based in the UK. He recently served as the chief curator of Krakow Photomonth 2014’s exhibition programme, ‘Re:Search’. Schuman is also a senior lecturer in photography at the University of Brighton, UK, and is the founder and editor of SeeSaw Magazine.

1000 Words

For an artist to toy with the material qualities of photography is a common device, even at a time when that materiality is becoming increasingly anachronistic. The great majority of photographs have been abstracted out of existence, transformed into reams of code. The original, material forms of photography, like film, are now almost solely the domain of artists and photographers with a point to make.

Hannah Whitaker's Peer to Peer published by Morel Books uses a combination of collage, in camera masking and other forms of manipulation to shatter the surface of her analogue imagery, in the process disintegrating them into many parts. This might seem like a well-worn path, were it not for the way these bits are organised to form distinctive patterns appearing to the viewer like a lost visual code. Indeed even the pictures in their arrangement across the pages seem to hint at some form of cypher, with empty areas occupied with an almost imperceptible varnish which echoes the shape of absent photographs.

The subjects of Whitaker's photographs (a mixture of portraits, still lives, landscapes and nudes) seem in many cases much less important than the patterns, which dominate and overwhelm the images below. The shapes and forms used create a powerful over-riding mood, with mosaics of dots and squares forming a calm, stable pattern reminiscent of Morse code, while the more anarchic triangular breakdowns prove enticingly aggressive. Vertical lines create the effect of a bar code or zoetrope, and the image beneath takes on a strangely powerful sense of motion.

The result of these experiments then is more than a nostalgic exercise in collage and old-fashioned photography. Instead Peer to Peer is a book seemingly with one foot in the material past, and with the other in the ever more dematerialised present. It is a book that plays with the codes and conventions of photography and abstract art, and does it fittingly enough, with the very material of photographs themselves.

— Lewis Bush

All images courtesy of Mörel Books. © Hannah Whitaker



It's Nice That

CHAMPIONING CREATIVITY SINCE 2007



Hannah Whitaker: (Untitled) Blue Shirt

Bold, experimental photography from American artist Hannah Whitaker

Posted by [Alex Hawkins](#), Wednesday 27 May 2015

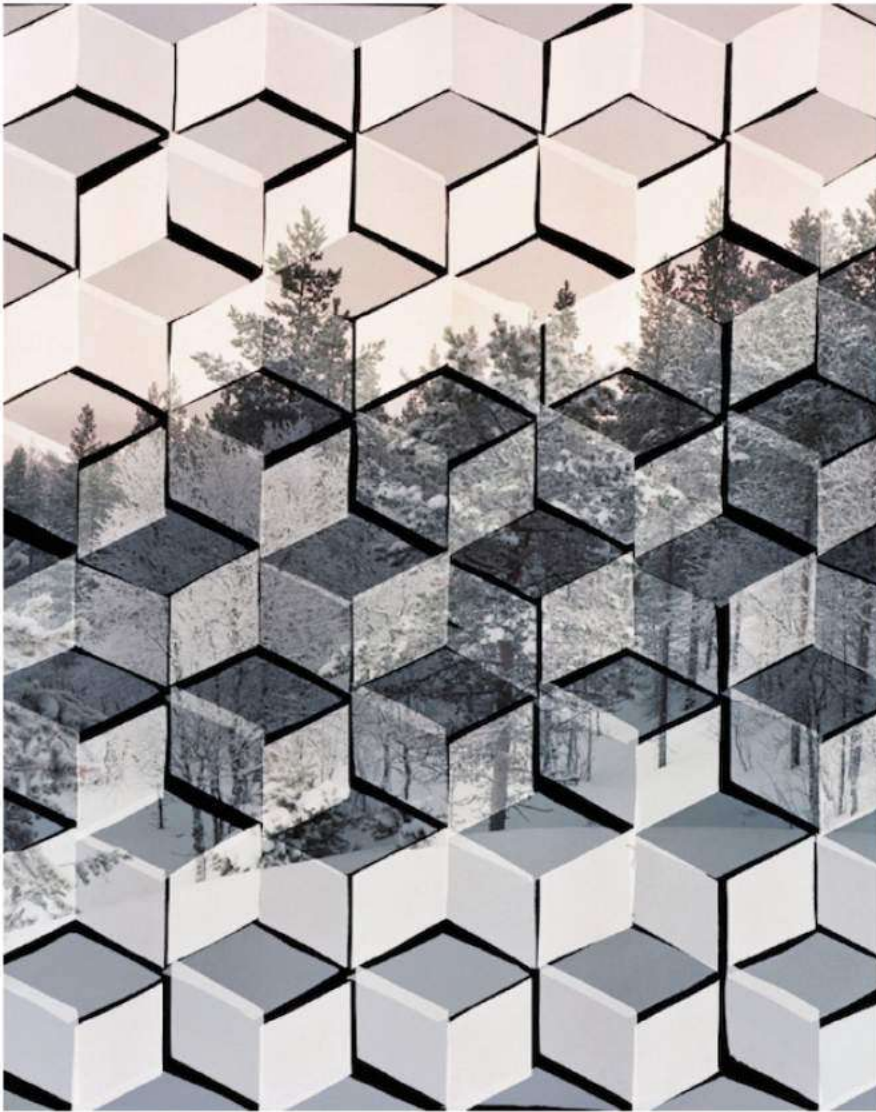
-  Like 25
-  Tweet 106
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At first glance you might mistake the puzzle-like, optical quality of Hannah Whitaker's photographs for the work of Photoshop, but her experimental images are surprisingly physical. A far cry from a nostalgic experiment with film, Hannah plays with ideas about the technical and the handmade as much as she confuses the conventions of photography and abstract art. Throughout her work, grids and mosaics of dots and triangles appear across wintry landscapes and still-lives.

Shooting through hand-cut paper she places inside the camera, Hannah pokes holes in the film holder or uses light leaks and multiple exposures to create geometric patterns over her subjects. These surprisingly simple methods produce layered, fragmented photographs that reference Bauhaus textiles like those of Anni Albers and remind us an image can still be a very material thing. There are always telltale signs of her in-camera techniques, as in *Blue Paper (Albers)* where the corner of a blank piece of paper folds back over itself and breaks with the pattern superimposed over it.

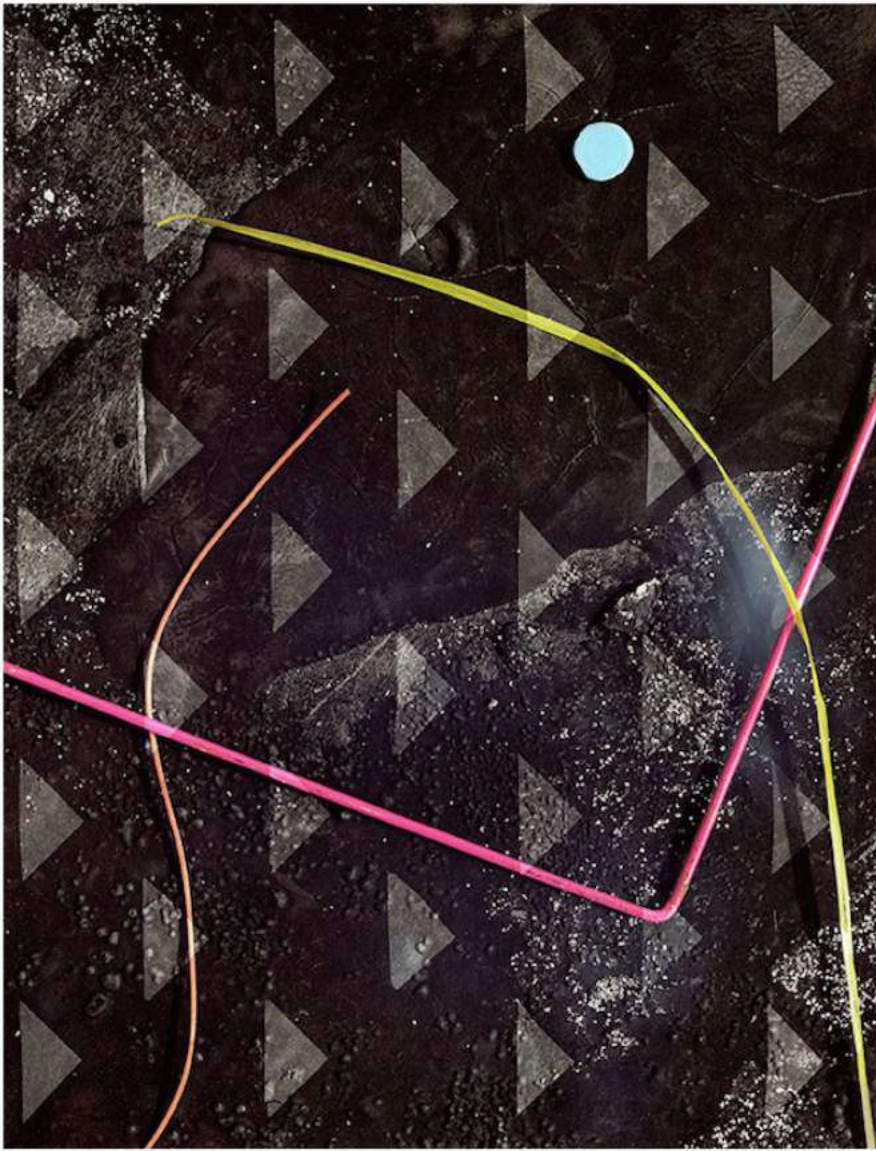
Last year the Washington native was one of 21 photographers selected for Foam Talent – one of the industry's leading international contests and platforms for young photographers – and exhibited at Amsterdam's Unseen Photo Fair. Since then she has released a book of her distinctive compositions with Mörel Books, *Peer to Peer* and is currently part of a group exhibition at London's Flowers Gallery 20 May – 27 June.

Hawkins, Alex. "Bold, Experimental photography from American artist Hannah Whitaker."
It's Nice That, May 2015.



Hannah Whitaker: Arctic Landscape (Pink Sky)

Hawkins, Alex. "Bold, Experimental photography from American artist Hannah Whitaker."
It's Nice That, May 2015.



Hannah Whitaker: Limonene 15

Hawkins, Alex. "Bold, Experimental photography from American artist Hannah Whitaker."
It's Nice That, May 2015.



Hannah Whitaker: Winter Landscapes (ML Bendolph)

Hawkins, Alex. "Bold, Experimental photography from American artist Hannah Whitaker."
It's Nice That, May 2015.



Hannah Whitaker: Limonene 23

Hawkins, Alex. "Bold, Experimental photography from American artist Hannah Whitaker."
It's Nice That, May 2015.



Hannah Whitaker: Blue Paper (Albers)

Further reading:

www.hwhitaker.com

www.flowersgallery.com



Posted by Alex Hawkins

Alex joined It's Nice That as a Freelance Editorial Assistant in May 2015 after graduating in History of Art from Goldsmiths College in 2014. He interned at *Dazed & Confused*, *NOWNESS* and the MAD Agency and was staff writer at *Avaunt magazine* before joining us.

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[30 articles](#)

Hawkins, Alex. "Bold, Experimental photography from American artist Hannah Whitaker."
It's Nice That, May 2015.

ArtReview

October 2014

Fixed Unknowns

Taymour Grahne, New York 14 July – 6 September

The title of the summer group exhibition at Taymour Grahne, *Fixed Unknowns*, curated by artist Ava Ansari and Molly Kleiman, deputy editor at the online magazine and nonprofit media organisation *Triple Canopy*, provides a framework for understanding the show, which features the work of three very different artists: Kamrooz Aram, Shirana Shahbazi and Hannah Whitaker. Each offers a clear lens through which to view their works – nods to art history or references to the physical world, for example – while at the same time denying any understanding of how they are made or what they signify. In essence they are matter-of-fact curiosities that ask you to puzzle over them.

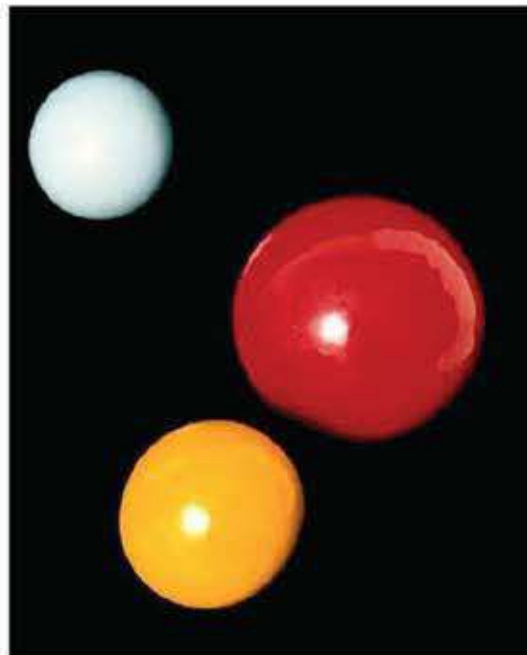
Shirana Shahbazi stands out for *[Komposition-10-2011]* (2011), a c-print on aluminium that looks like a portal into a world in which gigantic colourful spheres have replaced planets in the dark vacuum of space. Although the image looks digitally manipulated, it was created using an analogue camera. Shahbazi turned the spheres between exposures to create rounded edges. She plays with the viewer's

perception in other works to lesser effect. *[Komposition-03-2011]* (2011), a monochrome gelatin silver print on aluminium that appears to be a collage of geometric strips of paper, would look at home in the sterile boardroom of a hedge fund. And *[Diver-02-2011]* (2011) is a print that hangs high up on the wall as if to trick the eye into believing it's something more than a straightforward documentary photograph of a diver midflight.

Iranian-born Kamrooz Aram has lived in the United States for most of his life but remains fascinated by iconography plucked from Persian and Arab culture and used in modern contexts. The wall-based sculpture *Ancient Through Modern: Monument to the Sick Man of Europe* (2014) looks like a cenotaph – three small urns are placed on a platform in front of an abstract canvas that recalls both Constructivism and the pattern on a Persian carpet. Stuck into this canvas are two gold, filigreed Persian earrings. The work suggests more than it reveals. Just who the 'sick man of Europe' is today remains a mystery, but the association of the urns and jewellery

with funerary rites would be familiar to school children learning about ancient cultures.

Hannah Whitaker creates her photographs by inserting paper cutouts into the body of a 4x5 view camera and using them to create optical puzzles. *Blue Paper (Albers)* (2014) looks like an image of an Anni Albers textile printed on a piece of paper and collaged on top of a piece of wood – it takes staring at from the side to be convinced that this is a flat photograph. *Ship of Theseus* (2014) consists of 16 black-and-white framed prints that resemble the photograms of László Moholy-Nagy. The title refers to the conservation paradox posed by Plutarch in the first century: if all of the parts of a ship are replaced, he asked, is it still the same ship? It's not clear what exactly these photographs are replacing – arguing 'reality' would be pat – but even just puzzling over how Whitaker created the layered surfaces in a single print provides enough food for thought. Her works are the highpoint in an exhibition that enlivens the slick, sterile interior of Taymour Grahne with artworks rich enough to inspire more than just cursory contemplation. *Brienne Walsh*



Shirana Shahbazi, *[Komposition-10-2011]*, 2011, c-print on aluminium, 190 x 120 cm.
Courtesy the artist and Taymour Grahne, New York

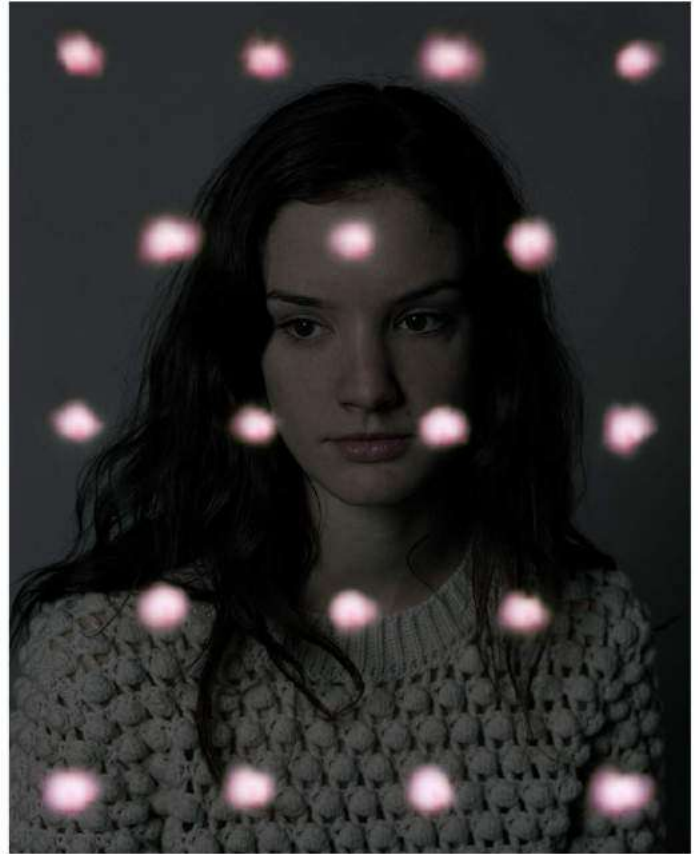
PORTFOLIO

**COLD
WAVE**
HANNAH
WHITAKER

10

Portfolios

All images © Hannah Whitaker. Photos: M&P Agency /
Portrait with Camera (2014)

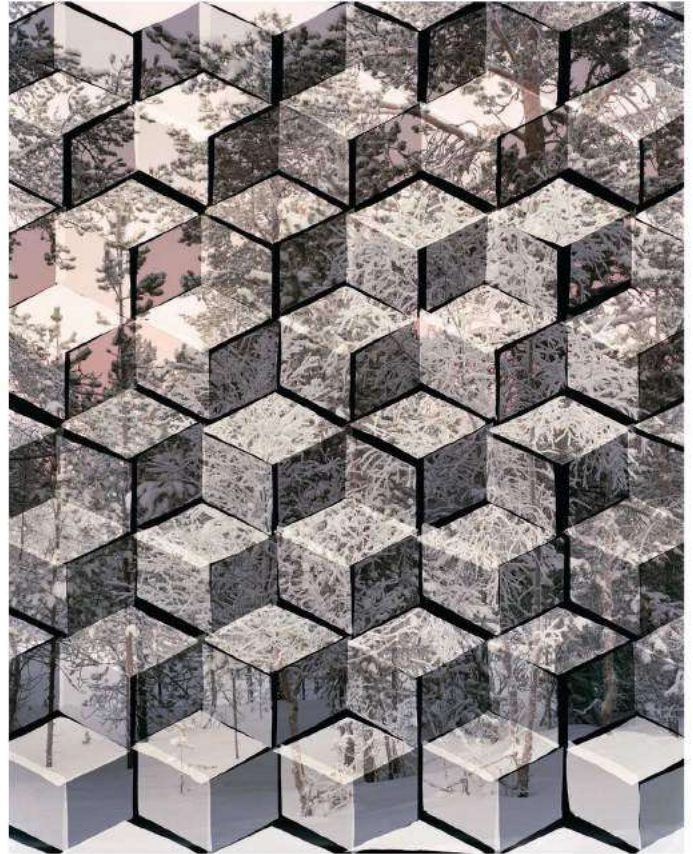


Hannah Whitaker

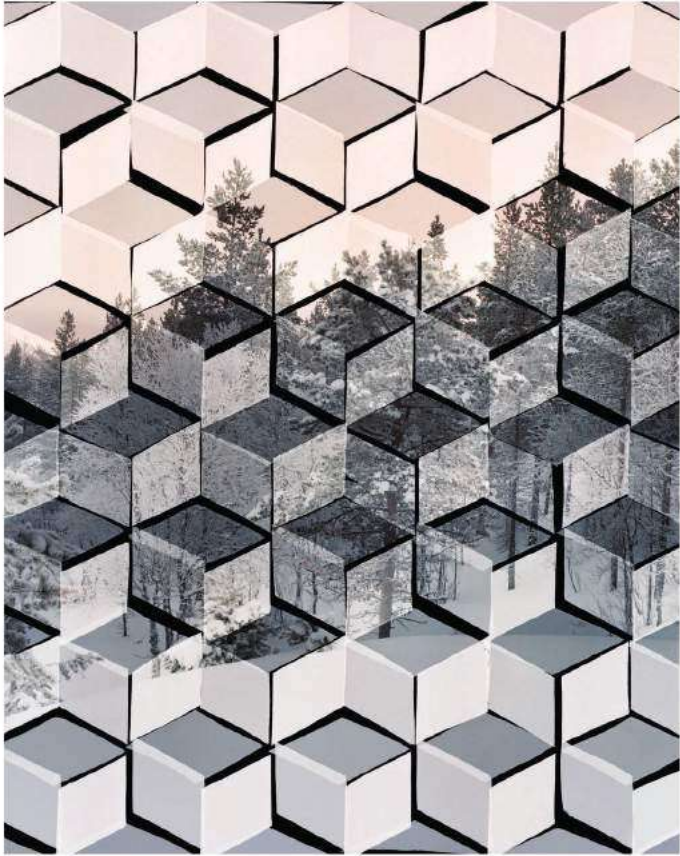
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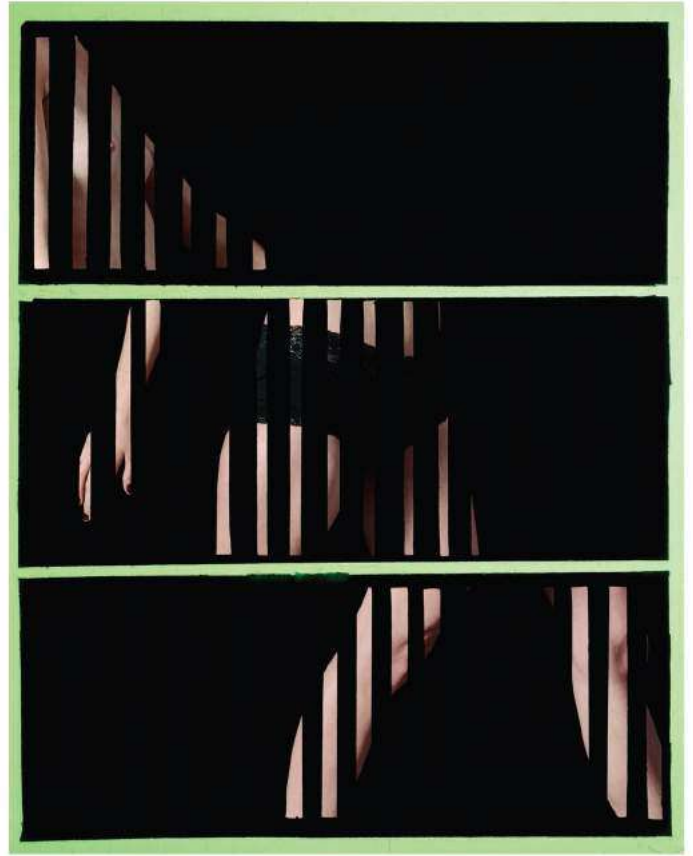
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Hannah Whitaker

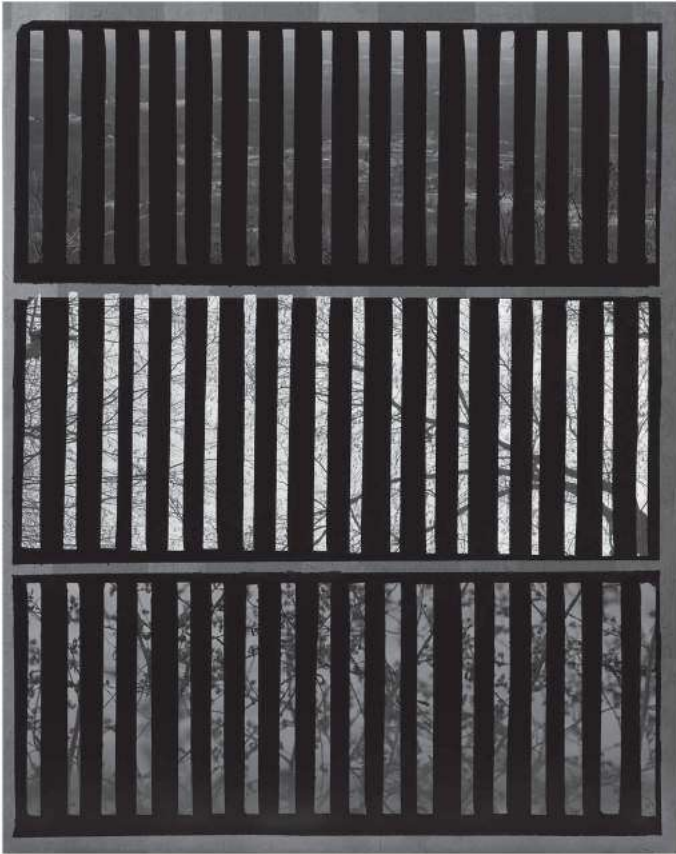
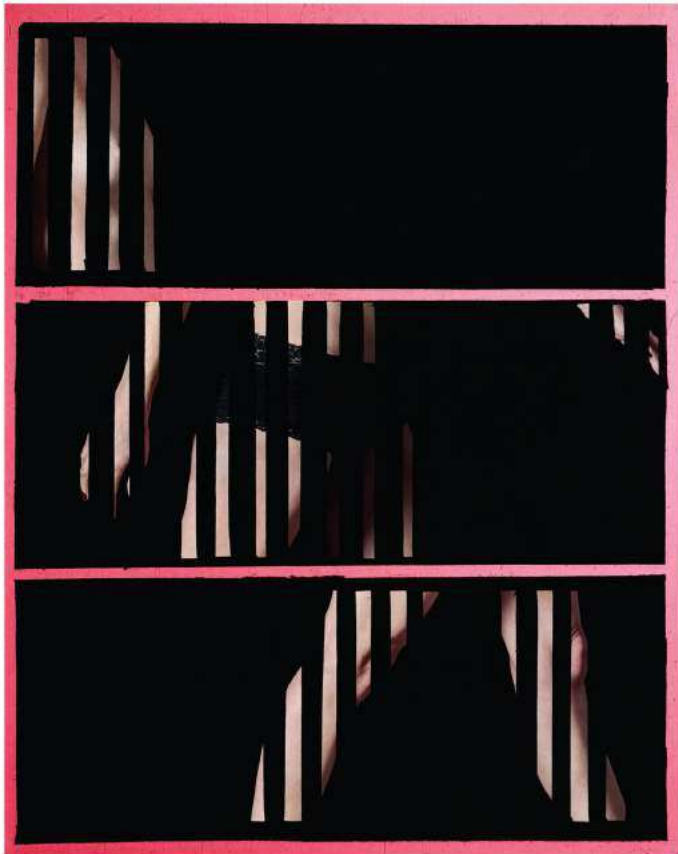


Photo by Hannah Whitaker

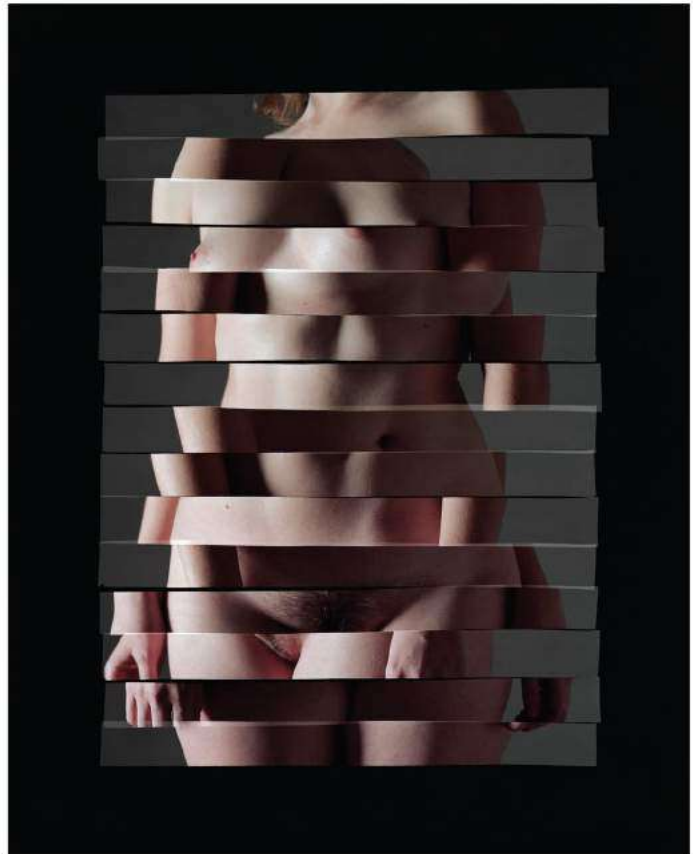
Photo by Hannah Whitaker





Hotshoe

Hotshoe



HANNAH WHITAKER

"EVERYTHING
THAT YOU PHOTOGRAPH
IS AT LEAST
SEMI-ARBITRARY; MEANING,
WE PHOTOGRAPH THE
PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS
THAT WE HAPPEN
TO HAVE ACCESS TO IN
OUR LIVES."

Cold Wave, Hannah Whitaker's new body of work, combines different image systems to produce optical puzzles; layered, manipulated images that merge the photographic representation of real referents in the world ...

... the nude, the portrait, trees, water — with in-camera mechanical interventions — bars, light leaks, matts, masks of geometric shapes. The images are all contained within the rectangle in a 4 to 5 ratio proscribed by the view camera, the literal boundary that provides the conceptual framework for Whitaker's explorations.

Whitaker calls the images shown together in *Cold Wave* a set, not a series. They belong to a closed system in which every element links and comments on every other — pictorially and materially. The use of the term 'set' may be in homage to Kurt Gödel, the celebrated Austrian logician Whitaker cites as a key influence. *Cold Wave* could be seen as an artist's response, with 'pseudo-

mathematical manipulations', as Whitaker jokingly puts it, to Gödel's theory of a constructible universe as a model of set theory in which the only sets that exist are those that can be constructed from simpler sets. Gödel was responsible for introducing the notion of unknowability to mathematics — a proposition doubtless appealing to an artist interrogating the dialectics of the medium of photography.

Walking (Green) 2014 — is an image containing a female nude who appears to be in motion in the act of descending — like a paused lenticular. The ground is acid green; the figure is interrupted by vertical and horizontal black bars. Whitaker creates the image by inserting hand made paper

screens into the film holder placed in the camera, shooting multiple screens and multiple exposures that expose only part of the film at a time and always on the same sheet of film. The black parts of the photograph correspond to the light being blocked by paper with the photograph accordingly revealed — a process with some parallels to silk screen printing and lithography.

Portrait with sweater (Green) 2014 is of a woman with long hair wearing a bobble-stitch top, apparently overlaid with regularly spaced, bright spots of green light. These are produced by small, controlled light leaks, made with pin-pricks in the film holder. 'I held the film holder against the paper that the cutout still life is on. The paper casts its glow and accounts for the colour. So, the process destroys parts of the image but creates something else — an imprint of a colour. I hope the repetition of her face, with its slight shifts in her facial position, echo the movement that, in other pictures, is contained in a single image.'

These images contain, within a single sheet of film, many moments in time — and an imprint of motion.

'I think so much more about the conditions for making a picture than I do about what the effect of it is in the end,' says Whitaker. 'I think about the film plane as a formal system, really focusing on these few inches — the interest not in what the picture is of, but in the grid itself — these few inches of material.'

'I feel more of an affinity with artists who are task-oriented, rule-based, and repetitive, and who establish a rapport between a mechanised hand and creative output and or analytical thought.' In fact, Whitaker takes many of the screens from patterns in the work of other artists such as David Bomberg and Anni Albers, and quilt-makers like Annie Bendolph.

In *Three Winter Landscapes 2014* and *Borcroft (Taubert-Arzt) 2014*, photographs taken by Whitaker of a vista, of bars branched trees, of the reflections of the setting sun in lake water, provide components of the final pictures. The black bar screens are the interruptions in the first picture, and the circle pattern borrowed from Sophie Taubert-Arzt, the masks in *Borcroft*. The images are about the imposition of a hand-crafted graphic system, a geometric logic, on the familiar images and subjects of representational photography.

But *Cold Wave* includes other pictures that have no real-world referents at all. *Cutouts (Pink) 2014* and *Cutouts (Green) 2014* are images of scattered geometric black, paper forms on coloured papers. They are the re-purposed surrounds of the cut-outs Whitaker has used to make her screens. 'For me geometric shapes invoke a lot of things — modernism and the history of geometric abstraction, industrialism and the standardisation of the shapes of things; consumerism and the exquisite geometry of all the crappy products in our lives (that's partly what this project was about); mathematics and the abstraction from the world that this way of thinking offers; patterning and its relationship to decoration (and its historical opposition to conceptualism); minimalism and its emphasis on gridding things out — for me all of these things stand in stark contrast to the deadpan mimetic representation that photographic depiction presents.'

The 'cut-outs' pictures are one of the staging posts in Whitaker's closed system — referencing other works in

COLD WAVE

the set, and existing literally as parts of them. They present to the viewer the materiality of paper on paper made by exposing light that results in an image on paper — the alpha and omega of the physical process of photography.

Hannah Whitaker's intellectual framework is rigorous, but there's a playful side. 'I like to foster confusion,' she says, confounding the viewer with 'How did she do that?' questions. *Purple Paper 2014* has no real referent to the world. The abstract shapes on the paper ground are produced entirely through optical means. There is nothing in the image that exists in real life — all the forms are created through masking and light. It is, in a literal sense, an image of an abstraction.

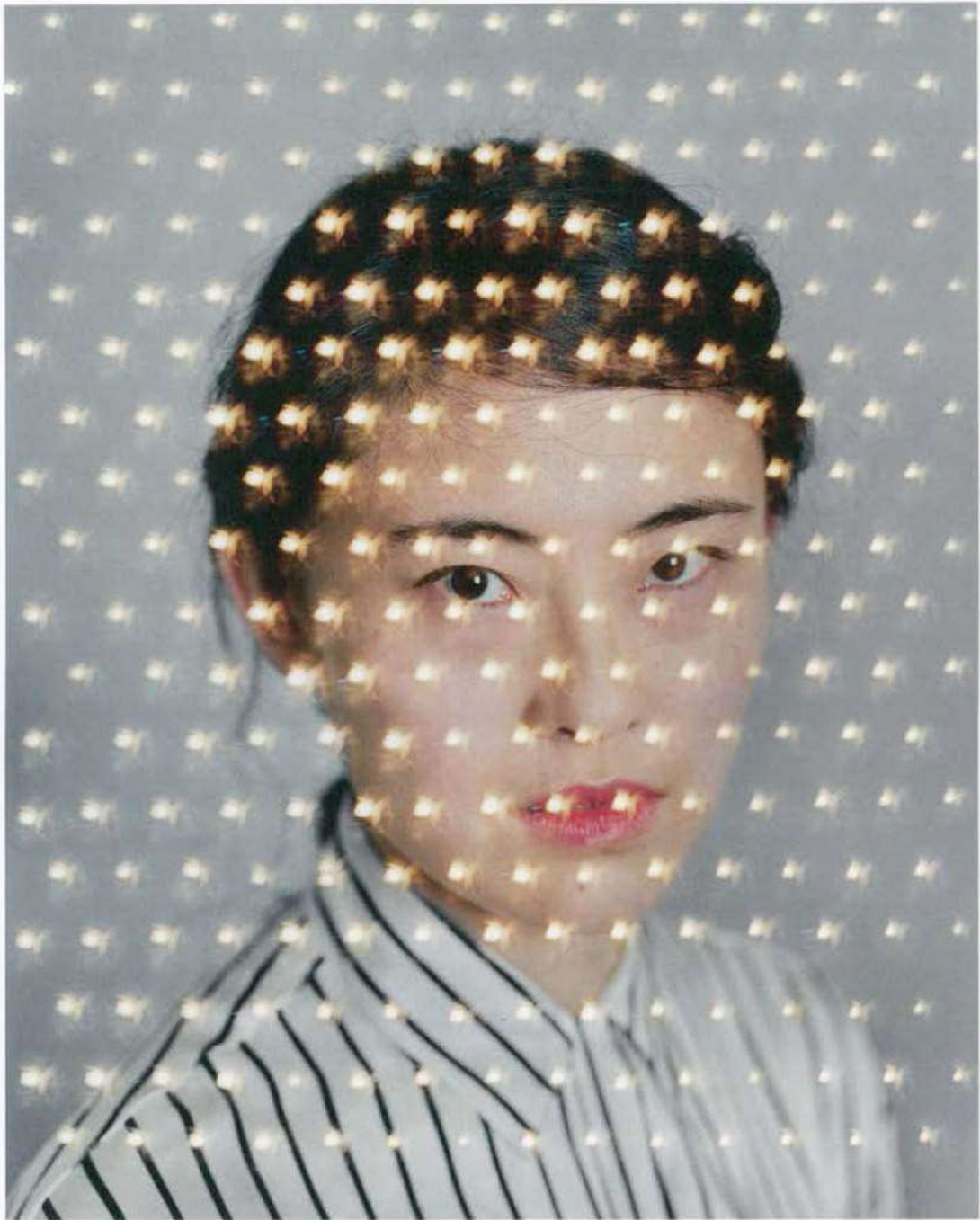
Cold Wave does everything possible to re-focus our perceptions; to re-wire the pathways of how we read and relate to images. Yet, Whitaker completely owns that the toe-holds she provides by way of the imagery not only read as reality, but are the habitual subject-matter of the medium, and will be the tethering rope by which many find their way across the contours of her world. She refuses, however, all representational attributes to the screens, pin-pricks or other manufactured interventions she makes. Nor does she ascribe to her colour palette (there black & white and acids) any psychologically inflected function. Her choices may be described as purposeful but not prescriptive. The bars are not intended to be read as 'prison bars'; circles are not symbolic of something else, blue is not calm, pink is not shorthand for flesh. Even the way the bars appear to frame nipple and crotch are not intended to comment on, nor induce a sexually inflected reading of the female nude.

'I am very interested in how human beings make meaning out of photographs — how a photograph mythologises its subject,' explains Whitaker. 'I love how everything that you photograph is at least semi-arbitrary; meaning, we photograph the people, places, and things that we happen to have access to in our lives.' To this extent her image bank is very personal. 'Despite my own emphasis on the conditions for making the photographs, it is what they are of that is really going to connect with people — the tiny bit of flesh or tree or what have you. This is partly why I decided to call the show *Cold Wave*, to acknowledge what the photographs are of, which is clearly something cold and wintry.'

Whitaker's work is visual counter-point a fugue. It delights in systems and patterns and sequencing, which throw up occasionally unexpected variants and provoke unpredictable responses, and where chance plays a randomising role.

SOPHIE BALHETCHET

Hannah Whitaker's work will be included in *Fined Likeness* a group exhibition curated by Molly Kleinman and Ann Aronson at Topmour Gracie Gallery in NYC, which opens in July 2014.



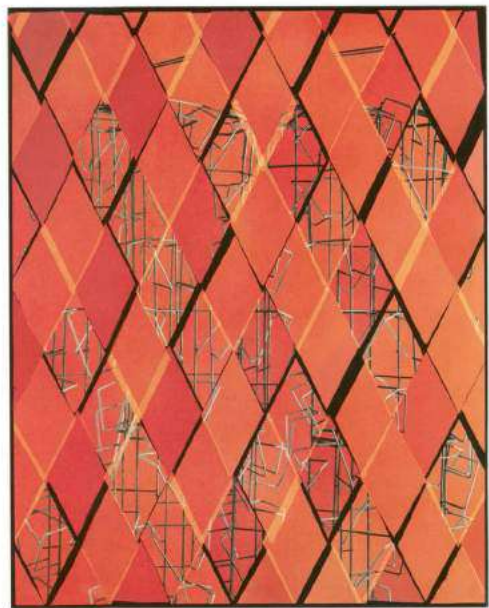
Hannah Whitaker
Untitled

81

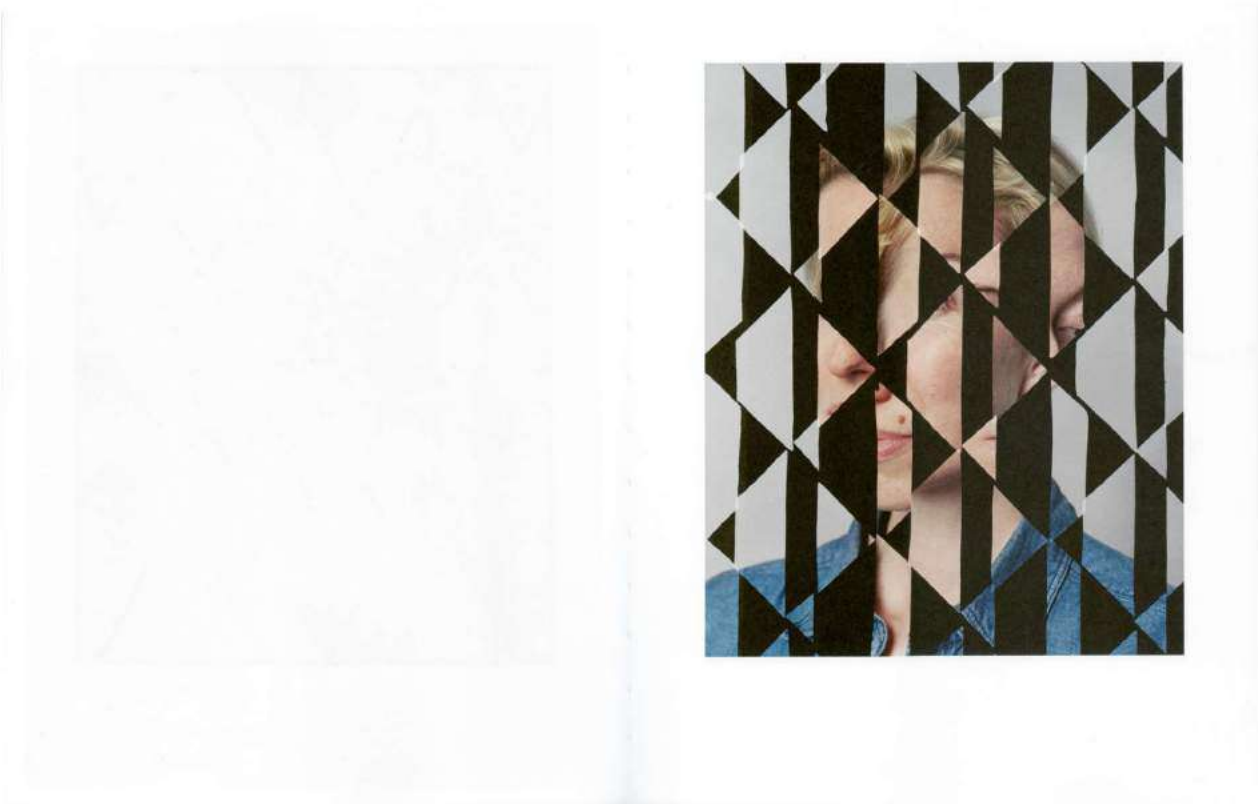
Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.



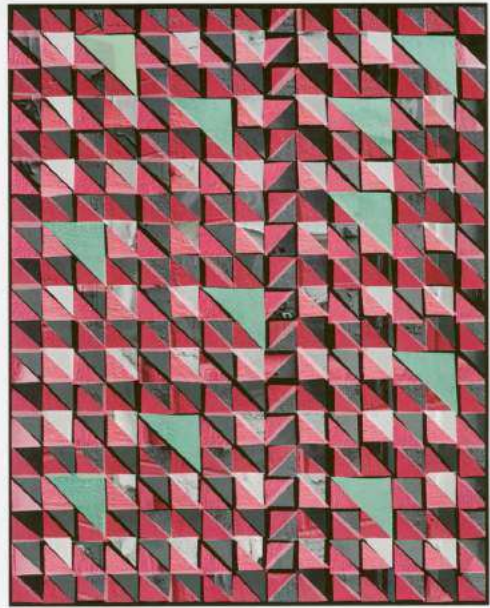
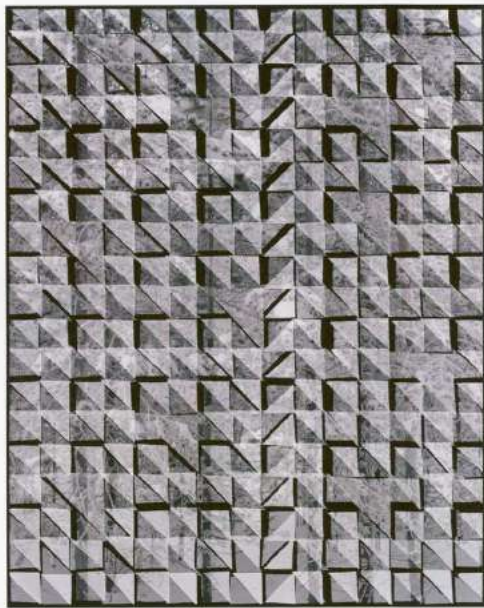
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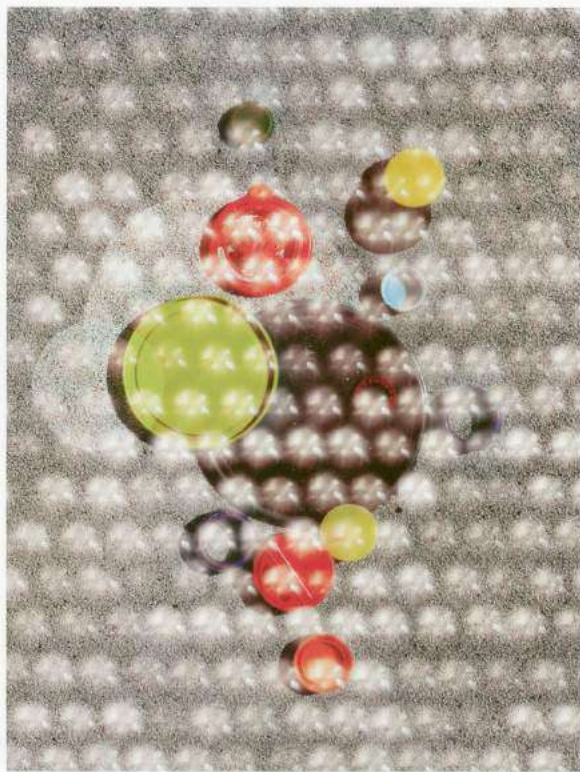
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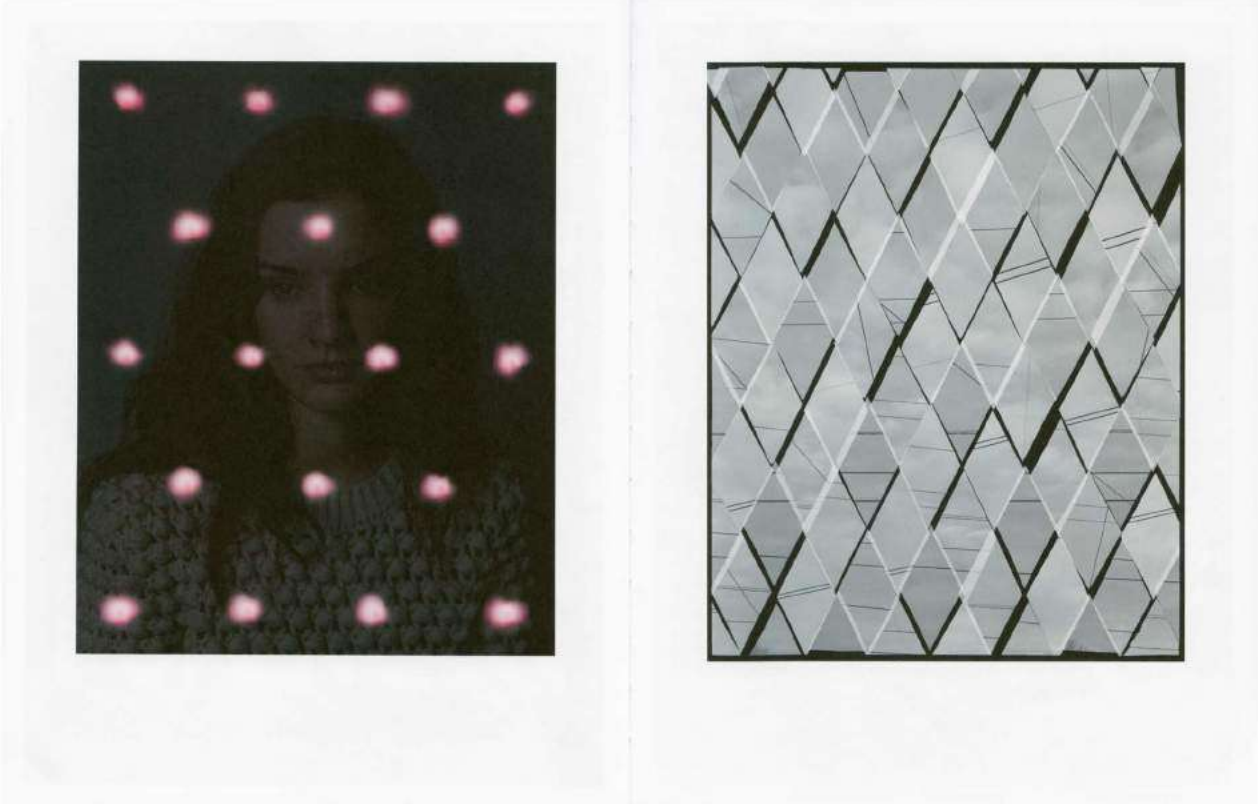
Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.



Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.



Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.



Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.



OPEN SYS- TEMS

by

Liz Sales

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On Hannah Wittaker

Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.



Talent

The structure of a photograph is often inaudible, muffled by the image it depicts. Hannah Whitaker amplifies this edifice, often working within strict, self-imposed structures derived from systems such as music and mathematics; the resulting work purposefully undermines its own logic by embracing chance and human error. Her light-based, in-camera work puts the material flatness of the photograph at odds with the dimensionality of her underlying, figurative photographic representations. The aggregate of ambiguity created by these paradoxes diminishes the certainties of photographic signification and compels us to contemplate the nature of photography.

Limonene is a body of work that Whitaker created early last year, with a multi-level site and material specificity, for installa-

tion at Laeust Projects, a non-profit exhibition space in Miami. She states, 'I went into that project unsure what would transpire. I found a bunch of plastic lids and, when put together, they reminded me of a Kandinsky painting.' With an interest in exploring the formal qualities of these recognizable objects, Whitaker utilized the geometric shapes and vivid color of consumer waste, foraged from Miami streets, to create a series of still-life compositions that form a visible connection between mass production and art.

Whitaker picked up her title, *Limonene*, from the streets of Miami as well. A red plastic cap included in a still-life arrangement that appears several times throughout *Limonene* spells out the exhibition's name: '*Limonene* is a ready-made title,' the artist explains. 'It refers to the chemical naturally occurring in citrus fruits that is extracted and used to mask the smell of cleaning products. So, *Limonene* is a weird combination of the natural and the synthetic.'

Miami finds its way into *Limonene* many times over; after shooting her detritus assemblages, Whitaker created intentional light leaks in her equipment in order to re-expose portions of the film directly to the Miami sun. Whitaker explains, 'I started doing in-camera work with the film itself after an experience where some of my film had accidental light leaks. The leaks created an interesting tension between the material of the film and what was actually depicted photographically. So, I started thinking about different ways to take ownership of it. I became very interested in mining that

territory, that space in between the photographic plane and the actual plane of the film. I poked holes in the film holder, which created hot-spots on the film itself, which became interesting to me as a theoretical proposition - they destroy the image, but are simultaneously generative of something else.'

Similarly, Whitaker also exposed multiple images onto single sheets of film, layering, for example, in *Limonene 18*, a geometrical pattern of triangles across an in-promptu still-life image of a roll of reel-to-reel tape strung through a compact disc on the street. These playful, in-camera techniques add a formal layer of mark-making that calls attention to both the flatness of the photographic frame and the dimensionality expressed by the primary, figurative representation.

Burned into her negatives in simple graphic configurations (dots arranged in a grid, for example), these experiments created a formal connectivity across *Limonene* for Whitaker to further complicate. 'I shot five or so frames of film of each arrangement of objects, usually taking the exact same picture, and then I created a unique layer of marks on each of those five sheets of film, often with direct sunlight. When I got all the film back, I decided not to edit, to use all the images instead of selecting one. I realized that, together, the images created a rhythm through the repetition of the same arrangements of objects over and over again, with no two pictures actually being the same.' Repeating each figurative representation of found objects, which themselves contain repetitive shapes and col-

Open Systems

Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.

ours, as well as each configuration of light leaks, created a complex multi-layer rhythm across the installation, akin to a multi-instrument musical score.

Whitaker entitled her solo exhibition at Galerie Christophe Gaillard in Paris *The Fifth Hammer*, after the story of Pythagoras, the historical source of Western musical theory who discovered the mathematical principles of musical tuning. Pythagoras is said to have tested a blacksmith's hammers, realizing that the hammers that were harmonious with each other had a simple mathematical relationship. The fifth hammer was discordant with all the others, so Pythagoras destroyed it. Whitaker's choice points to the limits of any attempt to quantify aesthetic experience, and congruently, her exhibition disrupts the logic of previously discreet bodies of work.

In the spirit of the fifth hammer, Whitaker included work from *Limouette*, as well as work made for her artist books *Imaginary Landscape No.1* and *Red*, thus disrupting the internal logic of these previously discreet bodies of work. Whitaker explains, 'I wanted to mix all the projects up because I felt like they were all dealing with similar issues in different ways. So, I thought that threads in previous work could be complicated by their proximity to one another. I am interested in the malleability of the photographic image. Our experience of any given image in a book is entirely different from our experience of a conventionally framed photograph. I wanted to see specific images re-substantiated for the exhibition in Paris.' *Imaginary Landscape No.1* appropriates the title and

structure of John Cage's historic 1939 score. *Imaginary Landscape No.1* is about borrowing a preexisting organizational structure. It's not about visualizing his music. The experience of looking at the photographs has nothing to do with the experience of listening to Cage's composition. It's a borrowing of his structural approach to composing music.' This visual strategy is echoed across *The Fifth Hammer* in works like *36 Antipopes*, in which 36 points of light complicate the depth and texture of a mass of tropical foliage, or, conversely, in works like *Jean Lafitte*, in which Whitaker's optically shaded cubic pattern creates a uniform depth across a shallow landscape. *Imaginary Landscape No.1* expresses Cage's musical notation atop conventional landscape photographs. Their linear perspective strikes a palpable tension once overlain with a grid comprised of points of light, each resembling a distinct sun.

Whitaker's other publication, *Red*, is the first in a series of artist books entitled *Visible Spectrum*, in which each participating artist was assigned a color from the spectrum to manifest in book form. Whitaker's project takes a single photograph, shot by her in 2006, showing a young woman in a red jumpsuit, which she

re-photographed 36 times. Each iteration employs a number of light-based interventions that are built upon a sequence of numbers that culminated at the thirty-sixth integer.

'I knew that I should plan to make the book either 24 or 36 pages because of how books are made. So, I used the page count as a limitation and a starting point.' She employed a numeric sequence consisting of 36 numbers. Each integer is added to the next ($1 + 2 + 3, 1 + 2 + 3 = 6$, etc.). The sum of all the integers from 1 to 36 is 666. 'I love the absurdity of this incredibly pregnant number that has cultural associations with the color red.' Calling to mind Marco Breuer's simple mathematic system for material interruption, each iteration of the image articulates its place in this numeric sequence

by employing light-based mark-making techniques, echoing those utilized in the creation of *Limouette*.

Reorganized into an exhibition, it becomes more apparent that a soft red circle is evident in the top-left corner of each image from *Red*, and that this idiosyncrasy is not an intentional intervention but the photographer's out-of-focus thumb in front of the lens. 'I've always loved that about this photograph,' Whitaker laughs.

I am interested in the malleability of the photographic image.

Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.

I like the idea of forcing your eye to move across photographs like they do when you read.

'because accidentally photographing one's thumb is the dumbest mistake a photographer can make.' Whitaker's visual wit is echoed in *Cohen's Fashion Optical*, in which a slit in Whitaker's negative carrier allowed for a white-hot streak down the center of her frame that reads like a rip in space-time or a portal to another universe. This drama is humorously staged in stark contrast to the advertisement for eye-glasses depicted within the frame.

Talent

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Imaginary Landscape No. 1 and Red coincided with a growing interest in applying the overarching structures of music, language, and mathematics to photographs. I was interested in using the book form as a way to place limitations on a particular group of photographs. Making an artist book forced linearity into the process. Also, I like the idea of forcing your eye to move across photographs like they do when you read.' Including these projects in *The Fifth Hammer* allowed Whitaker to revise them for the wall and create new points of triangulation among previously self-contained projects.

For *Cold Wave*, Whitaker's solo exhibition at M+B in Los Angeles earlier this year, the artist inverted the expansive approach she adopted for *The Fifth Hammer* in favor of constructing a more insular body

of work. 'When I got back from Paris in November, I wanted to approach the next show differently and conceive of it from A to B as a discrete exhibition.' While this work is distinctive, it also expands on previous themes, employing repetitive shapes, patterns, objects, figures, and scenes, both within single images and across multiple photographs, and binds itself through an even more complex material connectivity.

Blue Paper, which at first glance appears to be the source of the geometrical pattern of triangles across several other images in *Cold Wave*, reveals itself to the careful observer. The pattern continues just past one corner of the paper, indicating that it is not actually printed on the paper but exposed over it. *Cutouts (Green)*, *Cutouts (Pink)*, and *Cutouts (Orange)* are three still lifes comprised of the scraps Whitaker cut out of her dark slides in order to create the 4" x 5" masks used in marking the other photographs in the exhibition with light. She arranged and photographed the cutouts on three-colored paper backgrounds, establishing a material connection across the exhibition and creating a closed system with a sort of internal logic.

The images that comprise *Cold Wave* are, on the whole, formally darker than Whitaker's earlier work, with black space occupying large areas of the artist's frame. Despite these vast territories of nonrepresentational space, the remainder of Whitaker's initial subject is always resolutely legible. Snow-covered landscapes, portraits, and still lifes peek from behind dark geometry, recognizable despite gaps in their representation.

Cold Wave strikes a difficult balance, articulating itself pictorially while simultaneously bringing its edifice for articulation into sharper focus. I titled the show *Cold Wave*. I wanted to acknowledge the winteriness that, in spite of an emphasis on the conceptual framework, must come through. There is a certain futility to ascribing fixed meaning to a photographic work because so much of a photograph's literal content is arbitrary. I use what I have access to, what happens to be in my life, where I happen to go. But, even when we recognize this futility, we don't lose the impulse to look at an image and create meaning. Here, laying bare the photographic apparatus counter-intuitively also heightens the viewer's attention to the representational images.

Human beings are evolutionarily hard-wired to seek out human faces. Hence, in *255*, the light-based grid that obscures the subject's gaze serves to intensify it. Likewise, in *Torso*, a work that recalls James Welling's photogram series, the viewer can easily piece together a female form from fifteen interlaced exposures. Moreover, diamond-shaped gaps in the black layer obscuring *Untitled (Blue*

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Sales, Liz. "Open Systems." *Foam*, August 2014.

Shirt) reveal selections of one woman's face from multiple vantage-points, with only slivers of her defining features visible. 'I find it interesting that when we see a person, even if part of their face is obscured, the expression they're making and their bodily gestures are still legible. That's what we're wired to look for in a picture. It doesn't take much. I can mask out most of an image, and the tiny remaining sliver is all you need to make a human connection.'

All images in the current portfolio from the series *5th Hammer, Cold Wave* and *Limonene* © Hannah Whitaker, courtesy of the artist

HANNAH WHITAKER (b. 1980, United States) is a New York based artist and photographer. She received her BA from Yale University and her MFA from the International Center of Photography/Bard College. Whitaker is a contributing editor for *Triple Canopy*, she has co-curated *The Crystal Chain*, a group exhibition at Invisible Exports, and co-edited *Issue 45 of BlindSpot*. She has shown her work at Thierry Goldberg Gallery and Casey Kaplan, New York; Pepin Moore, Los Angeles, and internationally. She is represented by Galerie Christophe Gaillard in Paris and M+B Gallery in Los Angeles.

LIZ SALES (United States) is an artist, writer, and teacher who currently lives and works in New York City. She graduated with a MFA in Advanced Photographic Studies from the ICP-Bard College Program and with a BA from The Evergreen State College. Her background as motion picture camera technician endorses her work, as she deals primarily with the relationship between technology and perception. She has written articles for various publications, including *International Street Photographer*, *Triple Canopy* and *Musée Magazine*; she is also the editor of *Conveyor Magazine*.

Los Angeles Times

Review: Hannah Whitaker plays deftly with experimental photography

April 11, 2014
By Leah Ollman

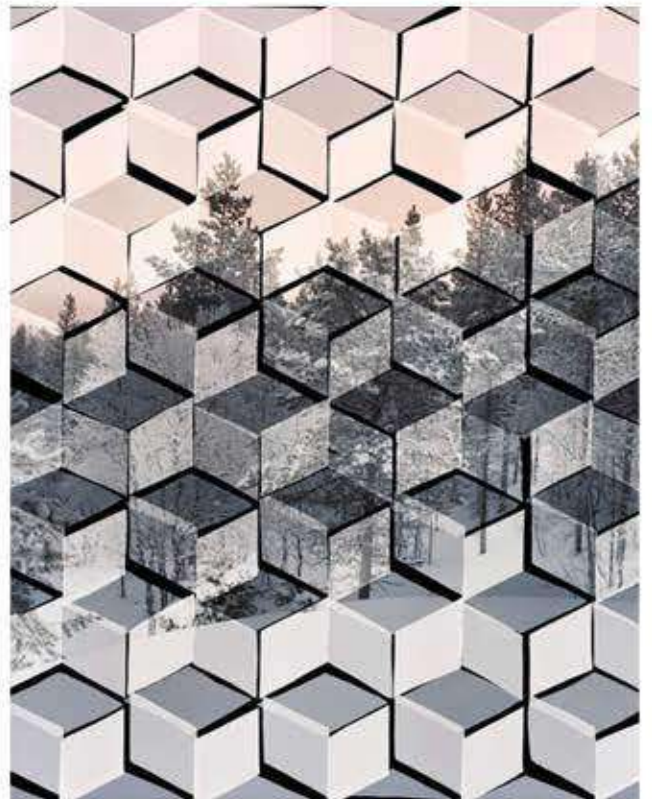
Hannah Whitaker employs a variety of means to produce her large photographic prints – multiple exposures, for instance, and shooting through cut-paper shapes – but the how matters less than the memorable what. Her first L.A. solo show, at M+B, abounds in interesting complications, interruptions, interferences in the field.

Based in Brooklyn, Whitaker regards the straight photograph as a mere starting point, an image to be manipulated, an illusion to be subverted. She plays deftly with concealment and revelation, structure and chance, shooting landscapes and a female figure through opaque, cage-like screens. Dark bars turn each single, continuous image into a halting, splintered spread, introducing a filmic sense of duration and stop-motion rhythm.

In "Arctic Landscape (Pink Sky)," a snowy scene reads doubly as a faceted plane of stacked cubes. Illusion layers upon illusion and each fragment serves as an integral component of two diverse representational systems.

Whitaker adopts mathematical schema, Gee's Bend quilt patterns and the forms of jazzy, hard-edge abstraction to add conceptual dimensionality to photographs, which are already conceptually complex by nature, at once indexes and interpretations, windows, mirrors and opaque objects. There are a few facile dips here, but overall Whitaker's work makes a smart, sprightly contribution to the present era of experimentation and expansiveness in photography.

M+B, 612 N. Almont Drive, (310) 550-0050, through April 26.



Hannah Whitaker's "Arctic Landscape (Pink Sky)" at M+B

Ollman, Leah. "Review: Hannah Whitaker plays deftly with experimental photography."
Los Angeles Times, April 2014.

EXPOSITION HANNAH WHITAKER, PROFONDEUR DE CHANTS

Par Clémentine Mercier
— 3 janvier 2014 à 20:26

Sélectionnée au prix découverte des Rencontres d'Arles en 2012, Hannah Whitaker inaugure sa première exposition personnelle à Paris, à la galerie Christophe Gaillard. La jeune Américaine née en 1980 compose ses photographies comme on écrirait de la musique. Le titre de son exposition, «The Fifth Hammer», évoque Pythagore : le philosophe, écoutant résonner une enclume frappée par des marteaux de masses différentes, inventa les gammes et jeta les bases de l'harmonie. Whitaker s'inspire de ses théories pour composer ses images : elle explore la matière à l'aide de motifs, en papier découpé par exemple, qu'elle intègre à sa chambre photographique. Un dispositif logique se greffe alors à des paysages de jungle, de caves et de débris trouvés dans la rue pour créer des compositions en plusieurs dimensions. Les couleurs et les formes vibrent. On pense à des textiles, à la technique du quilt. Comme dans *36 Antipopes (photos)*, des trous de lumières font chanter le tout. Quelques couacs font la saveur de ces images, ils sont un contrepoint nécessaire dans une partition très maîtrisée.





01

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Denny, Chelsey Morell and Leif Huron. "The Composed Image Hannah Whitaker and Noise." *Conveyor Magazine*, December 2013.

FIELD NOTES

THE COMPOSED IMAGE HANNAH WHITAKER AND NOISE

CHELSEY MORELL DENNY AND LEIF HURON

In the spirit of exploring contemporary photography's place in a broad cultural context, *Field Notes* draws parallels between the photographic medium and technology, science, music and the humanities. In this issue, we discuss elements of chance, repetition, and the everyday in the work of photographer Hannah Whitaker and composers William Basinski and Richard Chartier.

Imaginary Landscape No. 1, composed by John Cage in 1939, marks an early milestone in his exploration of extended techniques, a non-traditional methodology used in the pursuit of new or unusual sounds. As a student of Arnold Schoenberg, Cage first encountered a self-described inability to work within the logical structure of musical harmony. His career spans a decades-long proclivity for reimagining the role of instruments and non-musical objects in his work. Hannah Whitaker's recent project borrows the title of this composition and translates Cage's unconventional musical notation into an artist book, also titled *Imaginary Landscape No. 1*. Whitaker's ability to apply Cage's working methods—which have no inherently visual basis—to the creation of photographic imagery is a testament to the legacy of Cage's influence, which spans generations and crosses artistic disciplines.

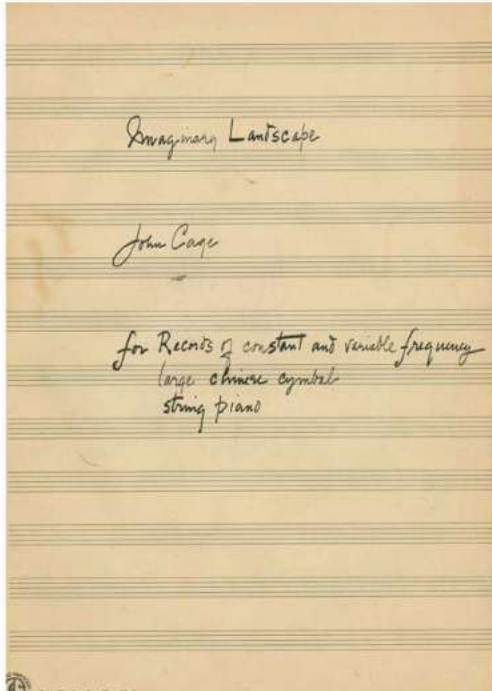
Whitaker's *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* consists of traditional landscape photographs overlaid with pinpointed light in various geometric configurations. To create this effect, Whitaker constructs hand-made masks, which allow light to leak onto the film's surface during the time of exposure. The specific arrangement of the light patterns Whitaker creates references and visually traces the compositional structure of Cage's original piece. By taking Cage's work as the starting point for her *Imaginary Landscape No. 1*, Whitaker references both the reimagining of the everyday and the deliberate circumvention of logic that comprise Cage's legacy. The format of the book mimics the rhythm of the original composition:

the four phrases are divided into four sections, each separated by a blank spread, which visually suggests an audible pause. The rigor with which Whitaker translates the structured framework of musical notation into her own visual language is critical to her artistic process, but it still leaves room for the element of chance to introduce varying and unexpected results in the final form.

The link to Cage in Whitaker's work is direct but the process of translating his ideas into images requires a healthy dose of creative license, as Whitaker clearly demonstrates. One of Cage's most significant contributions to sound art in particular is his dogged pursuit of the boundaries and margins of the medium and its traditions. Cage's work offers inspiration to the generations of composers who follow him to break the constraints of both medium and format, providing fertile ground for experimentation and the license to do so wholeheartedly. With Cage's ideas and influence as a linchpin, the collaborative work of composers William Basinski and Richard Chartier is born from the same cultivated environment of boundary-bending as Whitaker's work.

Individually, their artistic backgrounds are vastly different: Basinski is classically trained whereas Chartier actively eschews musical theory in his work. The combination of their divergent methodologies—especially viewed in light of John Cage's early struggles with harmony—are reflective of the common ground that exists between structure and dissonance, a balance both Cage

02



Orchestra

Victor frequency record 8+522 B at 33 1/3 R.P.M. Play on a small turntable provided with a cloth for change of speed.

Victor frequency record 84522 B at 78 R.P.M. 100 cycles. Simultaneous change with change of relations.

Victor Constant Note record No. 24 (84519 B) at 33 1/3 R.P.M. 84 cycles. Play rhythms not set by reasoning and previous note.

Victor Constant Note record No. 22 (84519 B) at 78 R.P.M. 84+cycles.

Victor frequency record 84522 A Play on a small turntable provided with a cloth for change of speed (33-78 R.P.M.). Begin at 33 1/3. Recorder shift closer with each (X) appearing in score.

This composition is written to be performed in a radio or recording studio. 2 microphones are required. One microphone picks up the performance of players 1+2, the other that of players 3 and 4. The relative loudness are controlled by an assistant in the control room. The performance may thus be broadcast and/or recorded.

Large Chinese Crystal

String Piano It is kind of very sound; note some with palm of hand without accents. Soft note in later.

Sweep bass strings with fine bow.

and Whitaker search for in their own works. Basinski and Chartier's compositions are a form of dialectic favoring intuition over reason, constructed through impulse and improvisation. They describe *Aurora Liminalis*, their second collaborative work, as “the aural equivalent of undulating trails of light” and the album’s single, 45-minute track can not be easily labeled as music; it functions more as an extended experience within a carefully constructed aural space.

Aurora Liminalis eases open with a spare arrangement of sound forming the firmament upon which the piece rests, with subtle chimes permeating the background. The transition from silence as the album begins is fuzzy and indistinct, and this is a quality that carries throughout the length of the work. The piece progresses and evolves slowly with barely-thawed stillness. Moments of sharp, focused sound are dotted throughout the work and prick through the haziness but immediately dissolve into the background. Layers and loops are collaged in crystalline, overlapping patterns. The overall impression is one of a suspended, glacial churning; we are left with ghostly echoes detached from their source.

It’s impossible to describe the work metaphorically; the work doesn’t sound “like” anything recognizable. This is a deliberate, if

somewhat unachievable effort. Basinski says, “I am trying to remove the obvious cues in much of my work, but it’s an impossibility. Our senses make connections with tangible experiences, memories, etc.” The experience of listening is, however, undiminished. Chartier adds that, recognizable or not, “all sound is real. This is why sound interests me. It’s not an illusion.” What results is a tangible aural space in which the listener is offered a densely ambiguous experience. To draw a stark contrast: there is no element of the guided verse-chorus-verse formula present in most pop music and therefore there is an overwhelming degree of choice in how the work is consumed by the listener. Without being told how to listen, the choice to follow one thread or another is left open. Rather than a rigid set of directions, the listener is offered faded blueprints. Nowhere is this more evident than in the creation of the piece itself, described by Chartier as “an improvisational session, revisited over the years, reworked, recomposed, extracted, pushed, and pulled until we were both happy with it. We do not subscribe to a right or wrong way in process. Things just evolve.”

The cyclical nature of all three of these artists’ works invites patient and meditative contemplation without the promise of resolution. Their use of loops and repeated imagery raises the possibility that



04 *Limonene 14*, 2013

05 *Limonene 38*, 2013

no two experiences are identical, and small shifts and changes in the work slowly move into the foreground of our experience over time. If an answer does come, it is the realization that what is vital and what is distracting may in fact be the same. Whitaker's work frequently relies on the use of repetition—she often includes multiple variations of the same base composition within a body of work. *Limonene* depicts familiar, everyday objects in unnatural and unusual compositions. As a result, these objects—bottle caps, straws, plastic bags—become unhinged from their intended settings and hang suspended in the picture plane as strange visual echoes of the objects we encounter all the time, distorted by the process of being collected and photographed.

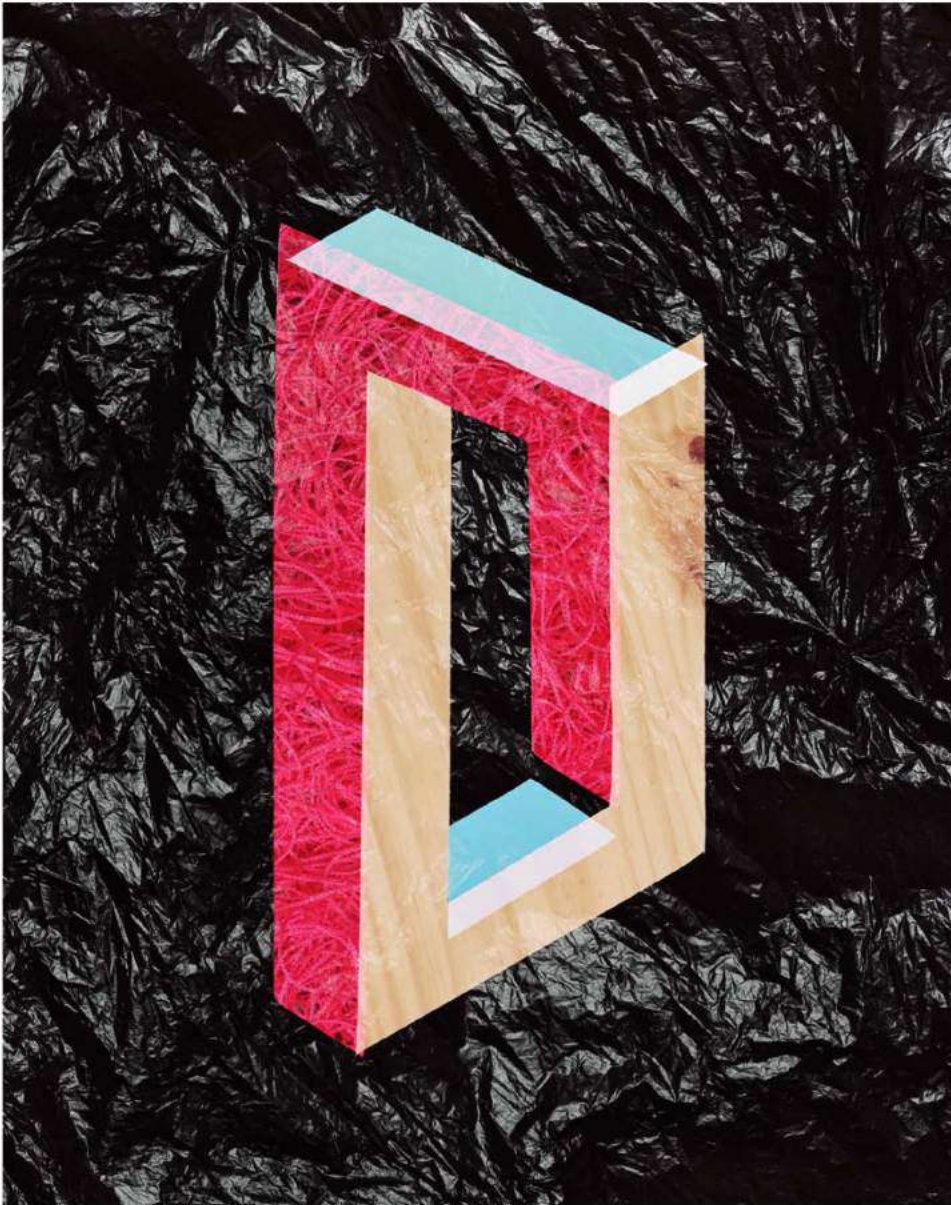
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No matter how effectively Whitaker reconfigures the latent meaning in the objects she collects, they are never rendered unrecognizable. Her vision of these objects does not blot out our memory of their former lives. This recycling of cultural material is a form of cyclical repetition—a materialistic loop. As with Basinski and Chartier, the experience of the work lies not in the singular image or sound passage but in the layering and repetition that comprises the work as a whole. Each cycle of the loop, and each variation of the image implies the possibility of a unique vision of the work, each iteration a subtle but distinctly different version than the next.

Layered loops figure heavily in both the individual and collaborative works of Basinski and Chartier. Chartier says, “Early on, I would base everything around a rhythmic track and then by the end the rhythm was completely excised ... so they just became ghost rhythms.” Their work pushes the threshold of the listeners’ perceptions as well. Basinski’s work is at times hazy and subsumed within layers of itself, passages are often looped in overlapping patterns, and individual tones dissolve into one another. Chartier’s work is characteristically reductive, minimalist, electronic, and at times, strangely hyperreal. Despite their seemingly disparate approaches, the work of both artists has the unique ability to push and stretch the experience of time and duration for the attentive listener, offering alternatives to our standard notion of linear time.

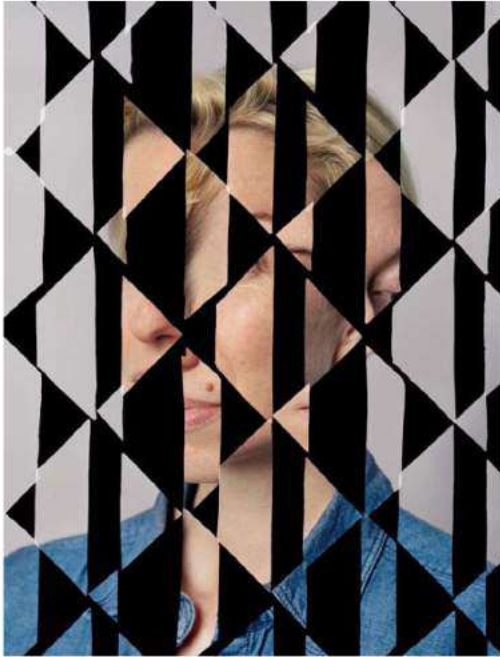
Art has the unique capacity to challenge traditional logic and loosen the grip of the technology-driven routine we have imposed on ourselves. It can provide a space to pause and listen to the background noise around us. As artists, Basinski, Chartier, and Whitaker embrace the static and sensory clutter that we might otherwise have ignored. Their use of layering and looping in the work suggests that a brief encounter is not enough, and that patience and duration are more important than a quick read.

The nuanced choreography between Basinski and Chartier stands in stark contrast to our overstimulated environment; we filter out the majority of our sensory experiences in order to navigate through



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- 06 *Canon Per Tonos*, 2013
 - 07 *Untitled*, 2013
 - 08 *Limonene 15*, 2013

07



our everyday lives. As the rate of sensory exchanges increases, we are more likely to miss or ignore the small changes and background information that linger in the margins of our culture. Basinski and Chartier offer listeners a space to engage at length with subtle and delicate sounds which are increasingly absent from our daily lives. Basinski observes that there is “a growing appreciation for the work, particularly amongst artists, writers, and creative people who need to fall out of time for extended periods.”

Whitaker addresses our hectic post-industrial lives by embracing visual dissonance. Her work explores the tension that exists between order, familiarity, and interruption. She uses systematic—sometimes impenetrable—puzzles that challenge conventional photographic logic and demand thoughtful contemplation. “The work, in its most abstract, is about defying [reason],” she explains. “In essence, noise is a kind of pattern defied.” Whitaker finds a kinship between absurdity and logic by simultaneously inventing and undermining rational systems. This strategy is apparent in works like *Canon Per Tonos*, in which a series of images of photographic screens imply the existence of an object that appears to skirt the laws of physics. Despite being constructed out of simple materials—light, film, and screens—the composition simultaneously confirms and denies

08



the photographic capacity for indexical authenticity. As Whitaker points out, this collision “creates an impossible visual realm which is antithetical to what a photograph is supposed to do.”

As sound artists, William Basinski and Richard Chartier are descendants of John Cage, who continues to shape and influence the work of the generations of composers that follow him. His work playfully ignored the boundaries between musical composition and studio art practice. Yet in a broader context, the work of contemporary visual artists like Hannah Whitaker offers testimony to the fact that his influence is scarcely limited to the world of sound. While Cage was a critical player in reshaping the way art operates within the tradition of music, he was, more broadly, a prescient iconoclast who did not subscribe to a clean division between high art and the substance of daily life, a stance which remains vital and relevant across artistic disciplines nearly a century later.

Photographs Courtesy of M+B Gallery, Los Angeles and Galerie Christophe Gaillard, Paris

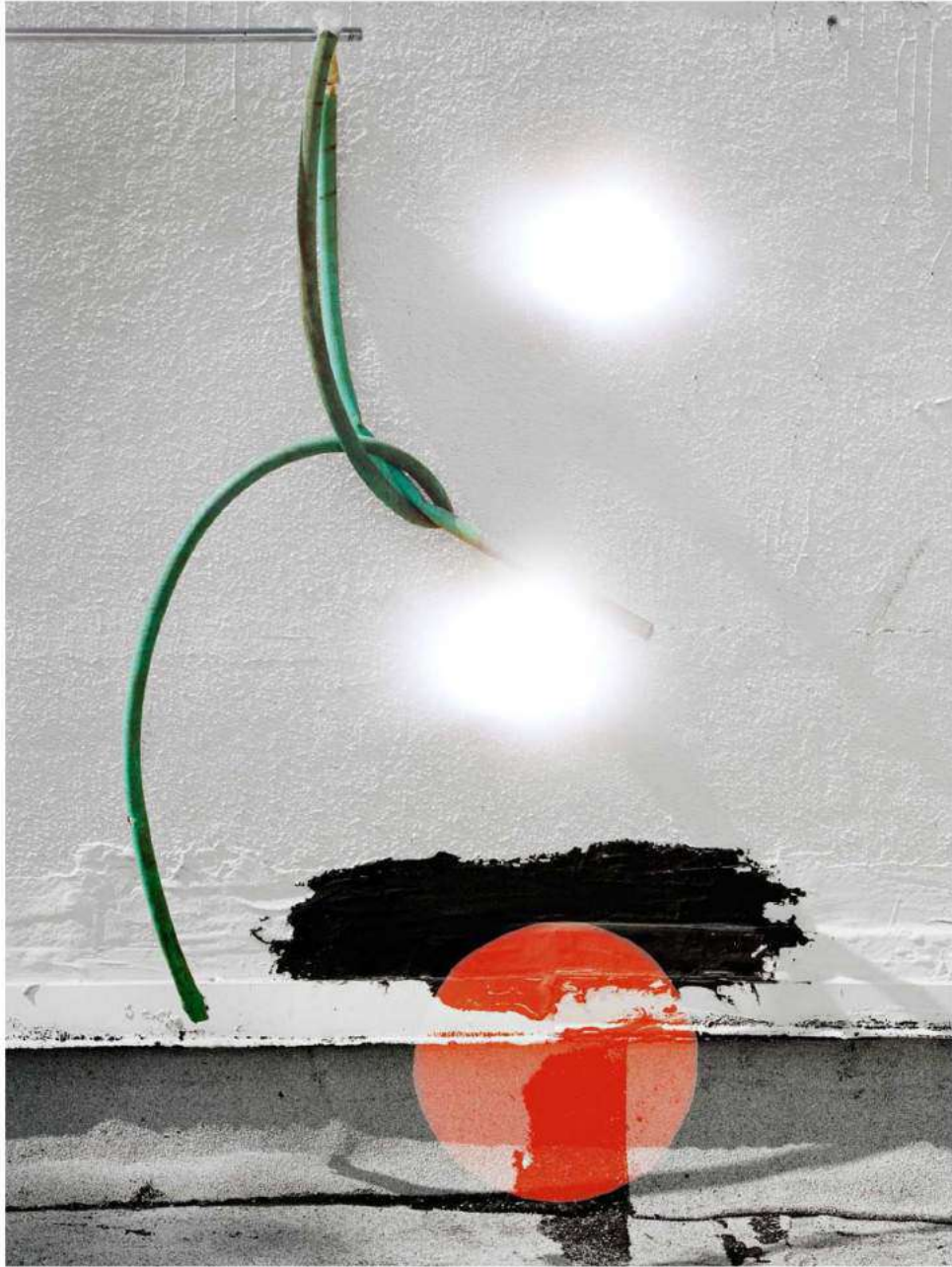
Denny, Chelsey Morell and Leif Huron. “The Composed Image Hannah Whitaker and Noise.” *Conveyor Magazine*, December 2013.



03



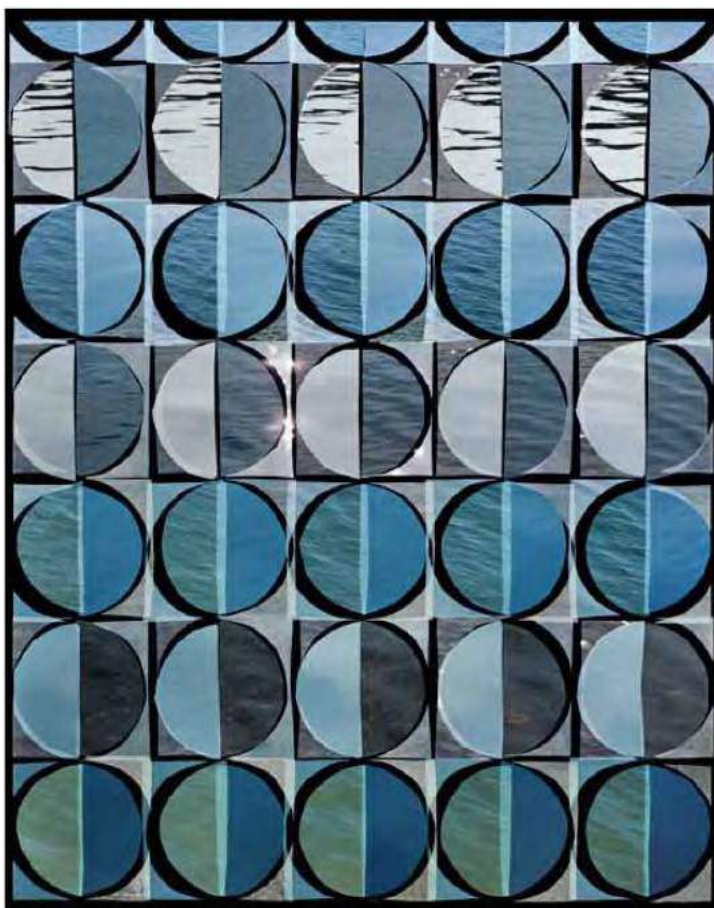
- 01 *Limonene 26, 2013*
- 02 *Imaginary Landscape: For records of constant and variable frequency, large Chinese cymbal, string piano. John Cage. 1939. Holograph in ink. Courtesy of Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden*
- 03 *Imaginary Landscape No. 1, 2012*



Denny, Chelsey Morell and Leif Huron. "The Composed Image Hannah Whitaker and Noise." *Conveyor Magazine*, December 2013.

FILE 02 | HANNAH WIHTAKER

PHOTOGRAPHER'S FILE



© HANNAH WIHTAKER 2013

連載 シャーロット・コットンのフォトグラファー最前線

ハナ・ウィタカー

BIRTH YEAR / 1980年 PLACE / ワシントンD.C.
EDUCATION / イェール大学、ICP/バード・カレッジ WEBSITE / <http://hwhitaker.com>

FILE 02 | HANNAH WHITAKER



2016, 2017



See Lyle's, 2017



Color's Action Detail, 2017



Installation View, Origin Photography, Gallery of Sacred Objects, Seoul, 2013

Courtesy of MOG Gallery and Esther Christy Gallery



Livens 28, 2013



No. 47

2016, 2017の「Hannah Whitaker」展では、彼女の代表作「Color's Action Detail」が展示された。この作品は、彼女の顔のアップを正方形のフレームに収め、中央に垂直な棒を刺さることで、顔の中心を通過する視覚的な軸を形成している。これは彼女の身体と空間の関係性を問う作品の一つである。

「Livens 28」は、鮮やかな色の球体が空間に浮かぶような印象を与える抽象的な作品である。これは彼女の色の感覚と空間認識の探求を示している。

「No. 47」は、黒と白の幾何学的パターンで構成された抽象的な作品である。これは彼女の形式感とリズムの探求を示している。

「Charlotte Cotton」の作品は、彼女のポートレートと抽象的なパターンとの間のつながりを示している。彼女の作品は、視覚的な面白さだけでなく、概念的な深さも持っている。

「Livens 28」は、鮮やかな色の球体が空間に浮かぶような印象を与える抽象的な作品である。これは彼女の色の感覚と空間認識の探求を示している。

「No. 47」は、黒と白の幾何学的パターンで構成された抽象的な作品である。これは彼女の形式感とリズムの探求を示している。



24 Whittaker, 2012



非連続する写真群が引き上げる
写真表現の限界

翻訳-空城 太 Translation: Futaba Hiyagi

ハナ・ウイタカーの写真作品は、初めて見たのは2008年に、彼女がニューヨークのICOP/PARK/カレッジの学生展で見た。その頃、彼女はポートレートと抽象的なパターンを併せて展示していた。彼女が「Color's Action Detail」を発表したときは、まだその頃のスタイルを踏襲していた。しかし、彼女の作品は、常に進化を続けている。彼女が「Color's Action Detail」を発表したとき、彼女はすでに、顔の中心を通過する視覚的な軸を形成していた。これは彼女の身体と空間の関係性を問う作品の一つである。

彼女の作品は、視覚的な面白さだけでなく、概念的な深さも持っている。彼女は、自分の身体と空間との関係性を探求するために、さまざまな実験を行っている。彼女が「Color's Action Detail」を発表したとき、彼女はすでに、顔の中心を通過する視覚的な軸を形成していた。これは彼女の身体と空間の関係性を問う作品の一つである。

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Hannah Whitaker

By Charlotte Cotton

October 2013

My first experience of Hannah Whitaker's photographic practice happened in 2006 when she was a graduating student from the conceptually driven, eminently interesting MFA program headed by Nayland Blake at the ICP/Bard in New York. I was immediately taken with the ways in which Whitaker photographs invite the viewer to project meaning, analogy and symbolism into her acute and gorgeously rendered depictions of her subjects. I recently went to Whitaker's studio between Brooklyn Queens Expressway and the East River's Navy Yard to see her, hours before their shipping to her first solo exhibition in Paris at the Galerie Christophe Gaillard. Whitaker is a fluent French speaker, having spent two years teaching English and learning French while in Paris after graduating from Yale University in 2002. Whitaker made a circuitous route to art in her Yale undergraduate program, alerted to the possibilities of contemporary art photography by the presence of the well-known MFA photography program and its students that included Mark Wyse, Walead Besthy and Shannon Ebner while Whitaker was an undergraduate.

When we meet, Hannah Whitaker reflects on how essential her experience of the ICP/Bard graduate program was to her development of a critical framework for her photographic practice. Frustrated by her own efforts to make photographs while in Paris ("I was locked in the landscape mode of photography") using 4 x 5 format film (which she uses to this day), the "very conceptual" emphasis of her MFA program offered her the intellectual nourishment to push her photographic practice into untested terrain. Looking around her studio walls, it is clear to me that Whitaker has not stopped innovating and pushing since we last met, using her exhibition opening deadlines to propel her ideas into new material photographic forms.

Whitaker describes her experience since graduation from ICP/Bard as unusual in that she has shown her work in exhibitions annually commenting, "Without an exhibition, I don't know how I would realise the final state of my work". Whitaker exhibits her photographs 'non-serially', creating dynamic installations of singular pictures that narrate her artistic proposal about the profound illegibility of the supposedly explicit and easily read medium of photography. Whitaker cites Roni Horn's 1999 exhibition *Pi*, held at the Matthew Marks Gallery in New York as an early touchstone for her own exploration of combining seemingly disparate photographic subjects into a powerful exhibition whole. She also reminds me of what an important trailblazer American artist Roe Ethridge has been in the 2000's for her and her contemporaries in his vivid combining of ostensibly separate photographic genres, "I'm very interested

Cotton, Charlotte. "Photographer's File Hannah Whitaker." *IMA Magazine*, October 2013.

in the codification that goes on when you place a photograph in a frame on the wall of a gallery. It is very important to me that the art work overtly addresses that coding of photography.”

Whitaker’s most recent change of gear has been to complicate her picture-making processes and their optical effect. Many of the photographs pinned up in her studio on my visit meld clearly photographic images with graphic disruptions created with hand-cut thick paper masks of idiosyncratic geometric patterns that go into the dark slide with her 4 x 5 film for exposure, creating images that Whitaker can anticipate but cannot fully control. As she explains, “ I have always been looking critically at the formal quality of a photograph but I’ve been doing this much more actively in my recent work by combining a ‘straight’ photograph with hand-made elements”. The viewing experience is undoubtedly intense with each graphic and photographic combination carrying its own character and collectively creating a dynamic of connections and juxtapositions on the wall. Whitaker’s work is generous in that the viewer has ownership of the experience, able to elect to see the photographic and the hand-rendered devices as a quasi-optical game. In some of the works, the photographic image wins out over Whitakers manual gestures. In others, the conscious references to Modern Art (for instance, Whitaker knowingly puts artists including Bridget Riley, Wassily Kandinsky into an visual conversation with the geometric patterns of traditional quilt design) force the photographic image into being a material deployed in an optical scheme. Whitaker acknowledges that her current working processes have shifted the extent of her control of her photographic images, “There is a degree to which I am submitting to the process. Even though I am knowingly creating permeations on different techniques, there is an undetermined aspect to the process and of me having to let something unfold.”

ART

Hannah Whitaker

In a new suite of highly stylized portraits at the Marinaro gallery, Whitaker departs from her previous methods of elaborate in-camera masking and multiple exposures. Instead, the photographer achieves spectacular effects—dark stripes of shadow and laserlike flares of color—by carefully staging each shot of the same female subject. Sometimes the woman appears in silhouette; other times, she emerges from shadow or is revealed in a slice of light. Her naturalistic presence seems at odds with the pictures' stark techno-futurism, which might otherwise call for android perfection. A second intriguing series is installed in the gallery's lower level—assemblages of jigsawed, brightly painted, photo-printed shapes are outfitted with light bulbs. These lamp sculptures recall the designs of the Memphis Group, but, arranged in a conspiratorial cluster on the floor, they are clearly more than mere décor.

—*Johanna Fateman*

Dec. 10-Jan. 24

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1 Oliver St.
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