

YANCEY RICHARDSON

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Mary Ellen Bartley

Reading in Color

October 24 – December 7, 2019

Opening Reception Thursday, October 24, 6-8pm



Yancey Richardson is pleased to announce *Reading in Color*, an exhibition of new work by Mary Ellen Bartley. Known for her exploration of the tactile and formal qualities of printed books, the photographs in the exhibition showcase colorful arrangements made from the dyed page-edges of mass market “pulp” paperbacks. Untethered from their titles and the stories within, these still life compositions quietly oscillate between abstraction, sculptural assemblage and color studies.

Fascinated by their formal qualities and position as objects of material culture, books have been the primary focus of Bartley’s work since 2004. She has worked with a number of libraries and collections, from Jackson

Pollock’s to the Beale’s of Grey Gardens. For her latest series, Bartley sourced her materials primarily from The Strand, New York City’s beloved independent bookstore. Obsessively combing the bins of forty-eight-cent paperbacks for “pulp,” a word describing both the content and material of the pages, Bartley amassed hundreds of books from the storied history of American mass-market paperback publishing. Even decades later, the lush colors and eye-catching covers meant to lure readers remain seductive and captivating.

Expanding on her earlier series, *Paperbacks* (2009-2014), Bartley found herself drawn to working with the colorful “pulp” books as a welcome escape from the relentlessly grim news cycle. A decidedly more vibrant and extroverted palette than her earlier series, the stacks and arrangements in *Reading in Color* focus on the single design element of dyed page-edges, creating a tension in the concealed themes and narratives of the books. Bartley both obscures and hints at the layers of history hidden in the segments of color, each stack carefully reduced to a study in color theory and minimalism. Short stacks take on the allusion of confections by Wayne Thiebaud, while tall, striped piles nod to Bridget Riley and Mary Heilmann.

Born in New York, NY, in 1959, Bartley received her BFA from Purchase College, SUNY. She lives and works in Sag Harbor, NY. Her work has been exhibited in numerous institutions including The Queens Museum, NY; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Houston Center for Photography; The Drawing Room, East Hampton, NY; Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY; The Watermill Center, NY; and National Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Guatemala City. Bartley has taken part in numerous residencies, including at The Queens Museum, NY; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY; and Watermill Center, NY. Bartley’s work is in numerous collections, including the Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY; McEvoy Family Collection, McEvoy Foundation, San Francisco, CA; Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, NY; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; The Watermill Collection, Watermill, NY.

Image: *Summer Reading #5* (from the series *Reading in Color*), 2019. Archival pigment print. Paper: 16 7/8 x 22 inches, Image: 13 7/8 x 17 7/8 inches.

For inquiries, please contact Sarah Durning Cope at scope@yanceyrichardson.com

For press inquiries, please contact Alex Pigeon at apigeon@yanceyrichardson.com