

Mary Ellen Bartley
Morandi's Books
October 27 – December 23, 2022
Artist reception: October 27, 6 – 8 PM
Walkthrough with the artist: October 27, 5:30 PM



Yancey Richardson is pleased to present Morandi's Books, photographs by Mary Ellen Bartley, on view from October 27 through December 23, 2022. Morandi's Books springs from Bartley's 2020 residency at Casa Morandi in Bologna, Italy, where she was invited to work with the personal library of Giorgio Morandi, the twentieth-century Italian artist whose quiet still life paintings have been an important source of inspiration from the beginning of her practice.

Bartley is known for her formal and poetic explorations of the printed book. Produced in unique libraries, (including those of Robert Wilson and Jackson Pollock,) and in her studio, Bartley's work concerns itself

with geometry and pure form; painterly in style, her photos also invite curiosity about the layered histories of the books themselves. Her photos are alive with questions – about what we do and don't see and the stories we tell. Yet the spirit of her work provides a reflective response, a respite, from a world that seems increasingly out of sorts.

When Bartley's Bologna residency was cut short by the pandemic, she returned to her Sag Harbor studio and began to explore ways to expand the project while travel restrictions prevented her from returning to Italy. Bartley embarked on a series of interventions in which the original photographs were manipulated with collage elements that subtly confound and disarrange the visual field and speak to the sense of isolation that the pandemic engendered. Part homage, part reinvention, the series takes cues from Morandi's own work, drawing on the painter's masterful poetic economy of style, tonal restraint and unerring structural balance. Bartley modifies the photographic imagery with modest means – a cut piece of paper, vellum, or the aged glassine typical of the papers that cover many volumes in Morandi's library. The strategic placement of these simple elements alters spatial depth and introduces an extra layer of time and experience to each photograph. In Celluloid with Blue Striped Vase, Morandi's own translucent viewing tool, a celluloid sheet with a hand drawn grid used to prefigure his compositions, is deployed in the foreground of the photograph.

Morandi's Books brings Mary Ellen Bartley's work full circle. She has gone to Bologna, worked in the studio with objects and books that belonged to the artist who inspired her, an artist she first encountered in books, and brought back images -- meditative, quiet, rigorously observed, -- that affirm the connection between the artists, and between artists and their books.

Mary Ellen Bartley was born in New York, receiving her BFA from Purchase College, SUNY. Her work has been exhibited at numerous institutions including the Queens Museum, NY; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Houston Center for Photography; Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, NY; and The Watermill Center, NY. Bartley has taken part in numerous artist residencies, including at Casa Morandi, Bologna, Italy; The Queens Museum, NY; Visual Studies

Workshop, Rochester, NY; Penumbra Foundation, NY; and Watermill Center, NY. Bartley's work is in numerous collections, including MOMA library special collections, NY; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis MN; Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY; McEvoy Foundation, San Francisco, CA; The Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ; Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, NY; and The Watermill Collection, Watermill, NY.

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Image shown: Large White Bottle and Shadow (from the series Morandi's Books), 2022. Archival pigment print.