

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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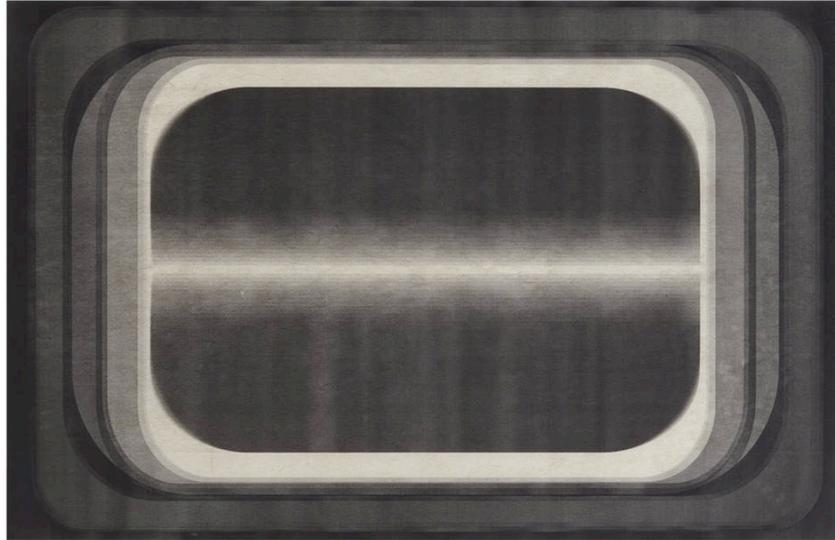
MARSHA COTTRELL

Eleven Rivington

11 Rivington Street and 195 Chrystie Street

Through April 5

By Peter Plagens



Marsha Cottrell's 2014 'Aperture Series (15)' at Eleven Rivington. Photo: Eleven Rivington

Marsha Cottrell (b. 1964) has been working with the machines we call “printers” for more than 15 years, with an emphasis on the subtle—almost mystical—properties of toner. She prints on everything from standard letter-size paper, to newspaper-size handmade sheets, to mylar. Ms. Cottrell works very carefully and slowly, which is perhaps why this is her first New York solo show in a decade. It’s a quietly, even grudgingly, beautiful one that not only rewards close looking, but plays well in the mind afterward.

Ms. Cottrell’s basic technique is to run her works-in-progress through the printer multiple times, so that the matte black iron oxide builds to pancake-makeup opacity on the surface. But she also chooses her pictorial configurations brilliantly, the two best formats being the “Spectral Sun” series of drawings, in which narrow, radiating white lines leave a seemingly glowing half-circle on one side of the composition, and the “Old Museum” pictures that form, as in the rabbit-or-duck perception puzzle, either gracefully modulated rectilinear abstract arrangements or blurred photographic images of galleries seen through glass doors. They’re both thrilling in a meditative way.

The Deliciousness of Staying Still”—the featured work (it occupies an entire wall) in the double-venue exhibition—is, on the other hand, more conceptually admirable than visually pleasurable. It consists of 142 solid

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black printed pieces of handmade mulberry paper mounted without intervals in a horizontal grid. One of the pieces, placed slightly to the right of center, contains a blank (that is, unprinted) circle that shines like a full moon on a cloudless night. The work serves notice that Ms. Cottrell can go big if she has to. She doesn't have to.