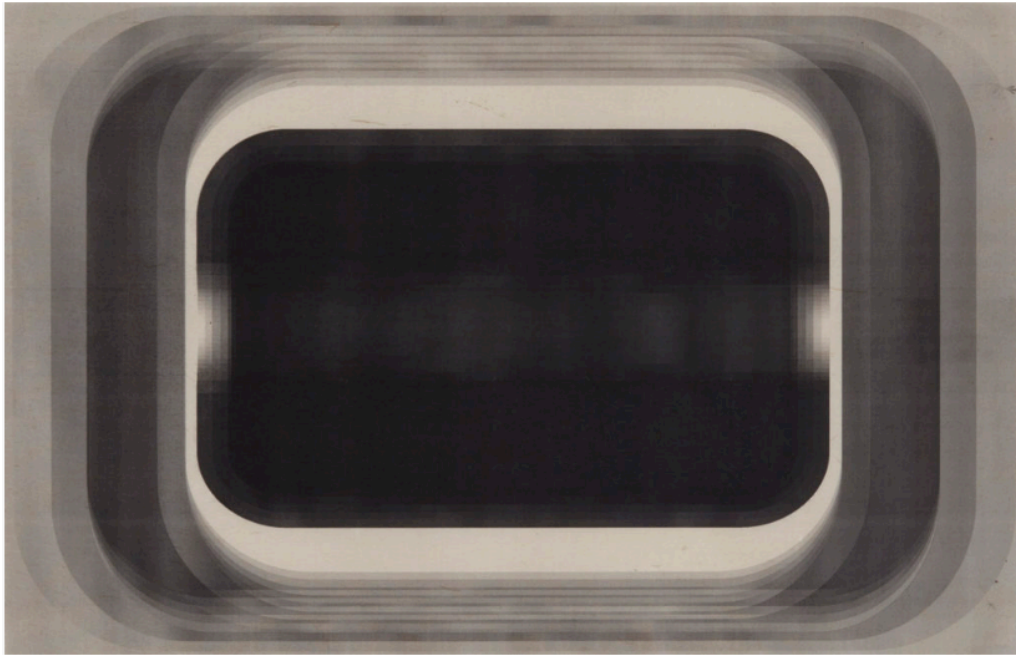


# WIRED

LIZ STINSON DESIGN 09.26.16 11:00 AM

## A LASER PRINTER MADE THESE GHOSTLY ABSTRACT IMAGES



Aperture Series (40), 2016; Laser toner on paper, unique, 11.625 x 18.125 in  MARSHA COTTRELL/ANTHONY MEIER FINE ARTS AND IIR

COMPUTERS ARE INSTRUMENTS of precision. But Marsha Cottrell, who specializes in computer-generated graphics, isn't so concerned with exactness. Her works, which she creates by feeding handmade paper through a laser printer, bear a closer resemblance to freehand drawings, or blurry, abstract film photography, than pristine products of digital technology.

In this way, Cottrell's pieces represent a beautiful blend of high and low-tech. "I'm interested in the idea of virtual space and screen space, but ultimately making it a tangible object," she says. Her latest works, on

display at San Francisco's Anthony Meier Gallery through October 21, are grayscale prints filled with geometries that resemble portals, sun spots, television static, and astronomical transits.

Cottrell began using office supplies in her art in the late '90s, while working in the production departments of various magazines. She found herself in front of computers for hours on end, staring into the flatness of their screens and wondering whether she could apply the tools she used at work toward the artwork she created in her off-hours. "I was just curious about the possibilities of what I could do with them during this time that I had at my desk," she says.

In some of her earliest work, Cottrell used programs on her computer to shrink typographic forms until they resembled smudged fingerprints. "I was interested in the idea of making an organic mark with a computer," she says. Today, she uses a laser printer like a technological paintbrush to transfer shapes and tones off her computer and onto paper. She rarely prints just one image. Look closely, and you'll see most of her images comprise multiple layers of toner, applied one atop the other, on handmade Japanese paper stock.

Some of Cottrell's pieces make more than 50 trips through the printer. She crafts each layer individually before feeding it through, dragging, rotating, and repeating shapes at subtly different intervals and tonalities to achieve the desired layering effect. "I'm working improvisationally," she says. She compares her technique to that of a painter who pauses after every brush stroke to consider his next move, a process that is by turns active and passive. It's a tension between binaries—not unlike her sooty gradients, which live somewhere between the organic and the technological.