

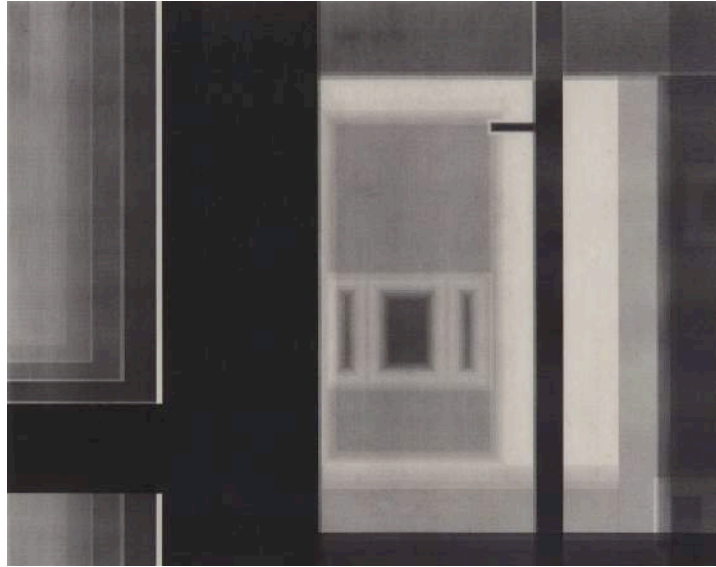
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MARSHA COTTRELL AT ELEVEN RIVINGTON

11 Rivington Street, Lower East Side, Through April 5

by Martha Schwendener



Marsha Cottrell's "Old Museum (Interior 7)" (2015) is made of laser toner on paper

Born under another sign, Marsha Cottrell might have been a consumer tester for laser printers rather than an artist. Instead, she has created a body of work that harnesses the power of office equipment, treating it like a paintbrush or master printer's tool.

Each work here is created by tweaking image files on a computer and feeding high quality paper — often mulberry paper, which allows the powdery iron oxide toner to build up on the surface — through the printer multiple times. Works in the "Spectral Sun" series have off-white circles of blank paper and radiating lines that are reminiscent of 19th-century photographs of the sun or Vija Celmins's drawings. (The dense accretion of powdery black material also reminds you of Ad Reinhardt's monochromes or Wade Guyton's black paintings made with inkjet printers. Although Ms. Cottrell's use of printers predates Mr. Guyton's.) Images in the "Aperture" series are hovering rectangles that recall early televisions, computer screens and grayscale 1960s geometric abstraction, while the "Interior" works divide space into slightly fuzzy grids.

Ms. Cottrell began as a painter but came to laser printers while working in production for a magazine. (Walker Evans, Barbara Kruger and Richard Prince also worked for publishers.) What's notable about Ms. Cottrell's aesthetic, however, is that it is for the most part intensely nostalgic: She uses current technology to make things look old. Paradoxically, because art that looks as if it was created decades ago is popular at the moment, her works appear very contemporary.