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ANTONIA KUO AND MARIAH ROBERTSON JANUARY 22 – MARCH 12, 2023

F is pleased to present a two-person exhibition by New York-based artists Antonia Kuo and Mariah Robertson. This exhibition concentrates on Kuo and Robertson's photo based works, which are often made without a camera. Instead of a more traditional approach to the medium wherein a camera is used to capture (and subsequently flatten) three-dimensional space into a single image, Kuo and Robertson opt to work directly with the materials of photography—photosensitive paper, chemicals, and light—to build their photographs in the darkroom and studio. Their photo works regularly spill into the realm of objecthood, in which the paper becomes volumetric and sculptural and the frame is a crucial container. Similarities and comparisons in their practices abound, but what perhaps most unites Kuo and Robertson is their skeptical analysis of the medium. *Antonia Kuo and Mariah Robertson* is on view, by appointment, from January 22 through March 12, 2023, at 4225 Gibson Street, Houston TX, 77007.

In her recent photo works, Kuo (who also has a dedicated sculptural practice, as with her recent ceramic, wood and steel objects currently on view in an exhibition at Chapter, New York) has resolved a tension with photography by neatly subverting its terms. She has come to refer to the main output of her work as “photochemical painting,” a precise verbiage that acknowledges the material makeup of her works but also their liminal status, defined by their betweenness, or plurality: both painting *and* photography. The process she has developed allows her to explore multifold strategies at the same time, primarily: the varied effects of photochemical alchemy; slowing down the process in order to work the photosensitive paper in multiple chemical layers; and incorporating picture making processes that are both hand-painted and mechanically assisted. Her resulting works, such as *Swamp* (2023), a large photochemical painting in blues and blacks that hangs unglazed in a wooden frame, are dense and hypnotically mesmerizing pictures.

The body of work that Robertson has produced over the last two decades is marked by her continual and aggressive confrontation of the photographic process. Although never entirely abandoning the medium, her works record the physicality of her wrestling with the materials in the darkroom and her development of different exploitations of them. The bold *2022, 89 & 90* (2023) is made with multiple photogram exposures on two c-prints, framed together as one. Her framed and torn *340* (2015) employs a chemigram process similar to the photochemical painting at the center of Kuo's practice, revealing the ways in which similar methodological approaches can lead to radically distinct ends. Robertson's sculptural *Light Box #2* (2023) pulls the photographic process out of the frame and onto the floor. Layered photo transparencies are presented lying loosely on Plexiglas raised on blocks above a jumble of LED tube-light fixtures, in a ramshackle deconstruction that turns the whole photo-object inside out.

And yet sometimes, for both artists, the camera remains. Neither artist rigidly rejects the camera; rather, it's become one of many tools at their ready. Robertson's *Book of 4x6" Prints* (2023), a more than a foot thick hand-bound book made of hundreds of 4 x 6 prints, is both a remainder of the excessive production of her project and emblematic of the traditional foundation that she is working against. It collects together dime-store prints of photographs that Robertson took in 2005 and 2006 (simultaneously a time when analog processing labs were rapidly disappearing as the industry replaced film with digital) that she recently edited, sequenced and bound. Kuo's *Stalker* (2023), an intimately-scaled rust colored photochemical painting, has two silver gelatin prints collaged into it, black and white photographs that depict flowering vegetation at night lit with a flash. The inclusion of the photo prints provides a high contrast between her photochemical paintings and her camera based work, pushing the definitions of these processes further apart.

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Antonia Kuo (b. 1987, New York City) lives in New York. She received an MFA from Yale University (2018), a BFA from School of Fine Arts Boston and Tufts University (2009), and a one-year certificate from the School of the International Center of Photography (2013). Her work has been exhibited at Chart, New York, Each Modern, Taipei, MAMOTH, London, Make Room, Los Angeles, Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. She has been an artist-in-residence at Mass MoCA, Vermont Studio Center, The Banff Centre, and was a MacDowell Colony Fellow, among others. Kuo's work is included in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art and Centre Pompidou.

Mariah Robertson (b. 1975, Indianapolis, IN) lives in New York. She received an MFA from Yale University (2005) and a BA in Religious Studies from UC Berkeley (1997). Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Arturo Bandini, Los Angeles, Green Gallery, Milwaukee, and the Contemporary Art Museum Houston. She is represented by Van Doren Waxter Gallery, New York, and M+B, Los Angeles. Robertson's work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Sir Elton John Photography Collection, London.

Work in exhibition, clockwise from entrance:

Antonia Kuo *Stalker*, 2023

Unique photochemical painting and silver gelatin prints in wood frame
26 x 22 x 1 1/2 inches (66.04 x 55.88 x 3.81 cm)

Mariah Robertson *Book of 4x6" Prints*, 2023

C-prints
14 1/2 x 4 x 6 inches (36.83 x 10.16 x 15.24 cm)

Antonia Kuo *Swamp*, 2023

Unique photochemical painting in wood frame
56 1/2 x 46 1/2 x 3 inches (143.51 x 118.11 x 7.62 cm)

Mariah Robertson *340*, 2015

Photochemistry on RA4 paper
31 x 26 inches (78.74 x 66.04 cm)

Mariah Robertson *Light Box #2*, 2023

Unique photo-transparencies, LED lights, Plexiglas, wooden blocks
20 x 79 x 62 inches (50.8 x 200.66 x 157.48 cm)

Antonia Kuo *Body Snatcher*, 2023

C-print and silver gelatin print in wood frame
26 x 22 x 1 1/2 inches (66.04 x 55.88 x 3.81 cm)

Mariah Robertson *2022, 89 & 90*, 2023

Unique c-prints in artist frame
46 1/4 x 31 1/2 inches (117.48 x 80 cm)

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