

# The New York Times

October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009

MARIAH ROBERTSON

'I Am Passions'

A growing number of contemporary photographers seem to be forsaking the ease and polish of digital image making for the romantic uncertainty of the darkroom. Mariah Robertson, who has shown at the SoHo gallery Guild & Greyshkul, which is now defunct, and is currently having her first solo show in Chelsea, is going a step further. In a giddy, colorful and highly experimental series, she cuts up negatives, splashes chemicals around and leaves the edges of her prints raw.

Ms. Robertson trained as a sculptor and she clearly thinks in three dimensions. Her pictures are multilayered, with cubes as a prominent motif. (Others include palm leaves and male nudes.) There are also quilt patterns and echoes of scattered-square Dada collages.

The combination of photographic techniques, often in the same picture, produces a wonderfully unstable field. Objects and abstract forms seem unmoored, slipping between the immediacy of the photogram, in which an object is placed directly on sensitized paper and exposed to light, and the more remote, mysterious processes of the C-print and gelatin silver print.

Given how much is happening at the abstract and technical levels, the nude figures are distracting. And the roughly scissored edges of the prints, meant to remind us that these are singular images, sometimes detract from their beauty. But Ms. Robertson makes a strong case that photography isn't just for perfectionists.

KAREN ROSENBERG