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Art

### Contemporary Art Photographers Mess With the Medium

Anxiety? Fetish? Picture-prone artists are loving themselves some process.

By Martha Schwendener

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The question of why certain practices thrive at particular moments feels like the art world equivalent of asking why honeybee populations have collapsed in the last decades or mussels have started growing in the Hudson. Why, for instance, are contemporary photographers—or, if you like, artists working with photography—obsessed with abstraction, materiality, and process?

First, the evidence. A good place to start is "Processed: Considering Recent Photographic Practices" at Hunter College (East 68th Street and Lexington, through December 12). The show includes artists like Marco Breuer, whose spectral abstractions, made by scratching and scuffing chromogenic paper, are hung across from Josh Brand's photograms that look like muted Josef Albers paintings. Markus Amm has folded photosensitive paper to create black-and-white photograms, while Curtis Mitchell drags photo paper through vats of chemicals to create moody, painterly "Meltdowns." The work of Wolfgang Tillmans, Tamar Halpern, and Jennifer West suggests abstract photography as a kind of frenetic punk practice. West's films, four of which are shown here, look like candy-colored Stan Brakhage films—at the same time nodding to Pollock's drips and splatters—and are made by slathering film stock with substances like food coloring or Teen Spirit deodorant.