

The
College
of
Wooster
Art
Museum

Ebert Art Center

Marjella Hackbardt

STORY OF KNOWLEDGES

This series of photographs is a meditation on knowledge, the power of its study and pursuit, and the strength and determination involved in the ways of learning. Instead of a body that functions in opposition to the mind, here the body acts in alignment with notions of thought or mindful purpose. People pay attention to the details of the world around them, even while this world of experience is limited to a small interior, a backyard, or the backdrop of a sand dune. Their perception is often guided by the senses of sight and touch, emphasizing the corporeal nature of knowledge. However, reality is not automatic or clear-cut. Rather, it is in question; and each character attempts to have an experience that will engender meaning.

My storytelling is staged, with figures and objects set into spaces where they never existed. The places, people, and objects in the photographs were chosen for their symbolic potential as well as for their aesthetic resonance. The final, digitally constructed photographs offer an opportunity for empirical investigation, as it is the viewer's experiences that shape the final interpretation of each.

The wide, horizontal framing of these images is intentionally poetic, and this proportional reference adds to the feeling that the narrative continues. However, in photography, the camera isolates one





In addition to light being symbolically associated with knowledge, it is also intrinsically associated with the medium of photography. And like knowledge, which is not static (it is continually updated—and then yesterday's knowledge is outdated and shown to be either incomplete or fully wrong), light is hard to pin down. Nearly immaterial, but suddenly and magically recordable since the mid-nineteenth century, light defies scientific categories by being both and neither, wave nor particle. Likewise, photography is infamous for its many binary indiscretions, including its ability to be both and therefore neither, truth nor fiction. In photography's wave-like rendering of the past into the present, and the present into the past, the fixing of light into silver and dye transfers its paradoxical quality to paper.

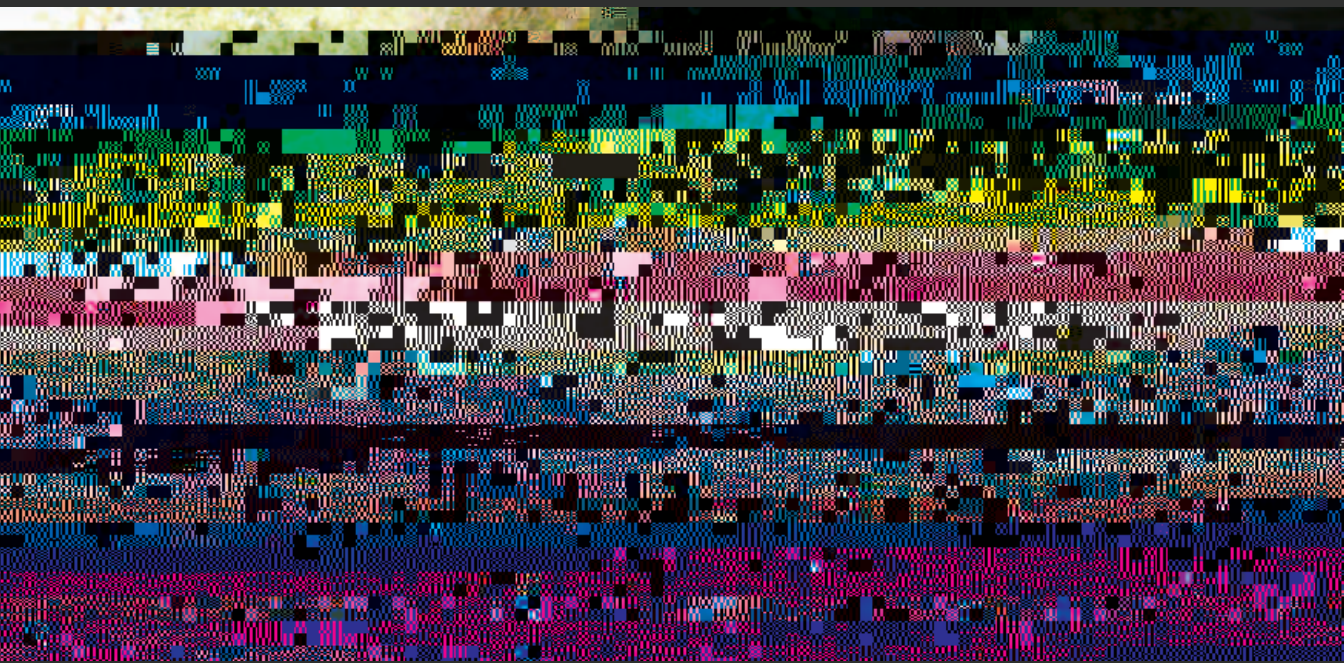
The camera itself—a dark chamber with a minimal amount of light entering through the lens—is a metaphor for the human experience. Like its correlation with the eye, the camera's chamber offers a correlation with the brain, taking in information in sometimes abstract and sometimes concrete bits. In our day-to-day existence of questioning, choosing, understanding,

objective measuring, subjective deciding, and divining details with a kind of vigilant awareness, we often suddenly "see the light." To this extent, the private rooms and darkened interiors that comprise *Stories of Knowledge* conjure the intimacy of the mind and the limited way we must interpret input through what is fundamentally a self-centered mechanism—ourselves. In *Self-Knowledge*, two women sit on the



ReSection, 2008
Digital chromogenic print
22 x 40 inches

Above: Objectivity, 2008
Digital chromogenic print
24 x 48 inches



Subjectivity , 2008
Digital chromogenic print
25 x 48 inches

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Marcella Hackbardt lives and works in Mt. Vernon, OH.