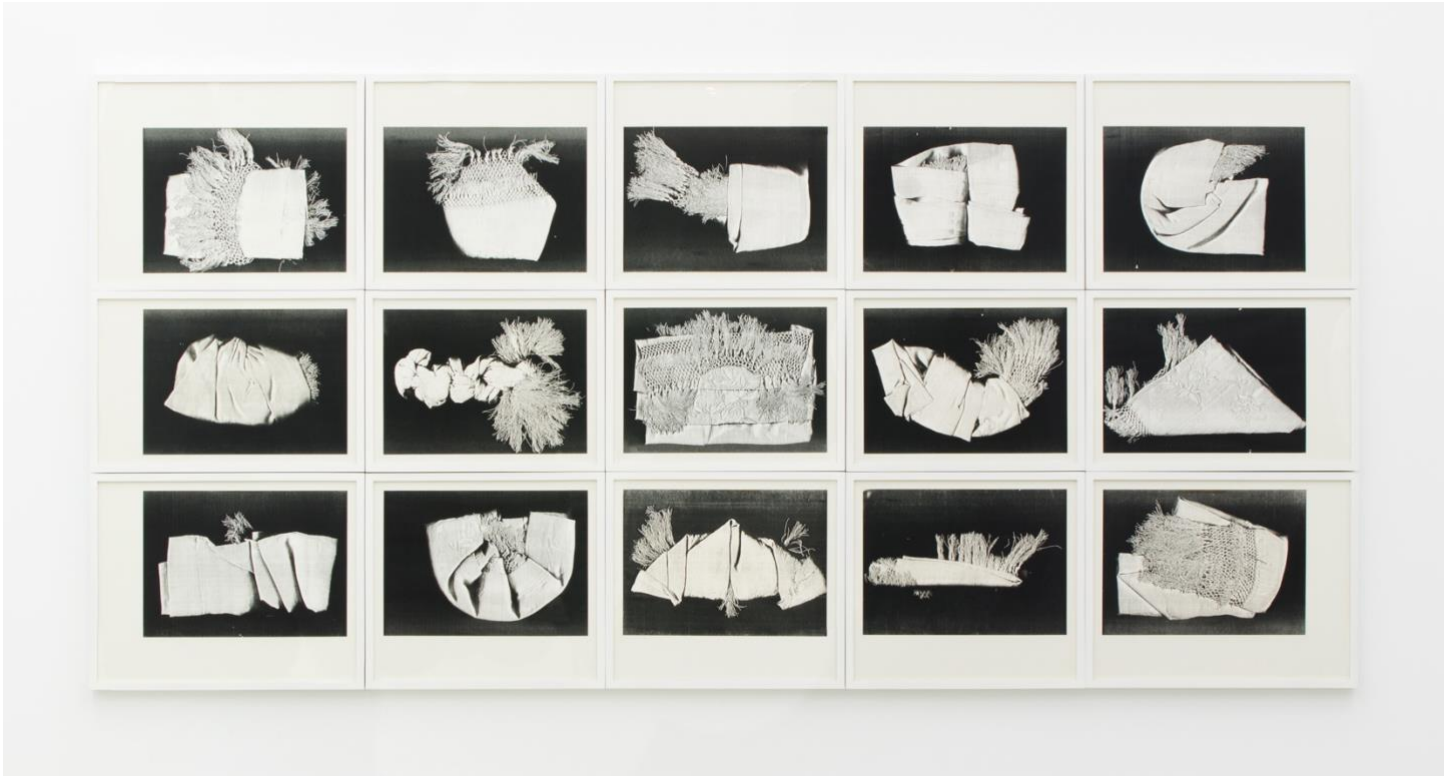


Art in Print

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Pati Hill's Scanning Bed Romance

By Jason Urban



Installation view, Pati Hill, *How Something Can Have Been at One Place and at One Time and Nowhere Else Ever Again*, Maxwell Graham/Essex Street, New York, New York, 2018

This exhibition marked the first New York solo show of Pati Hill's pioneering photocopy art since 1979, when "Men and Women in Sleeping Cars" appeared at Kornblee Gallery. Hill, who died in 2014, relocated to France in the early 1980s and remained there. While it would be inaccurate to describe the exhibition as a time capsule, there is an undeniable nostalgia invoked by the look of analog photo-copies, which dovetailed with Hill's own elegiac aesthetic to produce an exhibition more poetic than technological.

Three bodies of work were on view, produced between 1976 and 1983, and all displayed the telltale visual clues of early photocopying—heightened contrast and pronounced graininess coupled with refined detail, delicate edges leading to shallow gradients, a result of the machine's compressed depth of field. One can imagine an Instagram or Photoshop filter being developed to replicate this "copier look," but no screen could replicate the physicality of Hill's works. The discoloration present on a few prints and the gleam of melted toner set against the matte finish of the paper remind us that these are objects as much as images. Each is a shallow window reaching back into time, displaying objects touched and arranged by the artist's hand. The subject of *Untitled (men's shirt)* lies neatly folded and wrapped from the cleaners; in my mind's eye I could see Hill laying it face down on the copier bed to initiate an image that could almost be mistaken for a low-relief sculpture. The shirt itself is relatively timeless—plain cloth, placket front, spread collar. While Hill's garment dates from 1976, the same item might be seen on Wall Street today, or for that matter on any of the pocket-squared advertising execs in the AMC television series *Madmen*, on which the Xerox model 914 made a cameo appearance. (The status of the photocopy machine as a tool of exclusively female secretarial staffs adds a gendered component to Hill's labors.)