

Mary Ellen Bartley
Color Anthology
May 29 – July 2, 2026



Yancey Richardson is pleased to present *Color Anthology*, an exhibition of photographs by Mary Ellen Bartley, her fifth solo presentation with the gallery. Bringing together work from her series *Reading November* (2013–2021), the images in the exhibition consider the formal and poetic qualities of the book as an object itself, rather than as simply a conveyor of information. By stacking and grouping the found volumes together in ways both ordered and precarious, Bartley creates subtle arrangements that transform the book from an object of literalism into one of abstraction.

The exhibition will be on view in the project gallery from May 29 through July 2, 2026. An opening reception will be held on Friday, May 29 from 6–8PM.

For nearly two decades Bartley has explored the expressive potential of printed matter through series organized by differences in color, format or provenance. In each case, Bartley's photographs modify a given set of printed materials—typically books culled from bookstores, vintage shops or libraries and archives—into a vehicle for quiet and patient observation through a process of abstraction. This approach oscillates between revealing and withholding, oftentimes obscuring key details about what is contained inside and instead allowing the books to be encountered as embodiments of pure form or as studies in color. Typically beginning with a fixed number of books, each series presents a meditation on how variations can be created through a system of limited options.

The books in the *Reading November* series were collected by Bartley specifically for their top-stain—a decorative feature on the head of the book block originally intended to keep out and disguise dust and which became a decorative design detail beginning in the 1940s through the 1960s. Sourced primarily from bargain bins at secondhand stores both in Long Island and Vermont, Bartley began to appreciate not only the saturated tonalities of each top-stain, but also how the hardcover edges added subtly distinct shapes and additional layers of color to each composition. Working with just over a dozen different books, Bartley constructed arrangements in her studio using dark and muted colors while photographing at the same time each day during dusk. Using flat light and long exposures, she created pictures that embraced the somber winter season then beginning to slowly encroach day by day. Evoking classic still-life, color field painting and minimalism, Bartley's pictures elevate the everyday vessels of knowledge into timeless elements of poetic form.

Born in New York City, Mary Ellen Bartley received her BFA from Purchase College, SUNY. Her work has been exhibited in numerous institutions including Museo Morandi, Bologna, Italy; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; The Morgan Library and Museum, New York, NY; Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, NY; The Queens Museum, NY; and The Watermill Center, NY among others. Artist residencies include Casa Morandi, Bologna, Italy; Pollock Krasner House and Study Center, Springs, NY; Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY; Penumbra Foundation, NY; The Queens Museum, NY and Watermill Center, NY. Her work is in permanent collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; The Morgan Library and Museum, NY; The Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ; MoMA Library Special Collections, NY; and the Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, NY among others. The artist currently lives and works in Sag Harbor, NY.

For sales inquiries, contact: Dara Metz, dmetz@yanceyrichardson.com

For press inquiries, please reach out to the team at ALMA: hannah@almacommunications.co

Image: Mary Ellen Bartley, *Reading November #10*, 2021. Archival pigment print, 17 3/4 x 22 3/4 inches.