

# Continuous Present

## Christina May Carey





# Same same but different

Repetition is often understood to be something negative; sameness; the result of a lack of imagination; stagnation; of being boring; inhibited; uptight; controlled; mindless. Which of course, it can be, if we're thinking about being repetitive. But repetition done with awareness, with presence, with intention, becomes something else. It transcends the mundane and mindless and becomes a discipline; a tool; ritual; devotion; a practise.

In *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir identifies two types of work; immanence and transcendence. The former being the chores; domestic labour; a woman's work that is never done. The latter, transcendence, the work of men that allows for growth, development, progression, self-determination. Of course this has nothing really to do with sex, but everything to do with self-determination. Although there is something innately, inescapably feminine about repetition. It operates beyond the forward momentum of masculinity; of dominance; of progress; progression. It's cyclical, but never exactly the same. Feminine bodies with wombs operate on cycles, inescapable cycles that repeat roughly every month. The moon orbits the earth on its lunar cycle roughly every month. The Earth orbits the sun, and repeats, repeats, repeats. Always different, always the same. Repetition is built into our world in the same way it's built into our bodies; a foundational force; in cycles; patterns; always the same; always changing; always becoming; different.

In *Difference and Repetition* Gilles Deleuze explores repetition within the parameters of originality, even liberation. Castrating it from previous definitions that flattened it within the realms of reproduction or replication. Instead of seeing repetition as something we're doomed to fall into, he framed repetition as a process, a way of meaningfully applying ourselves not just in the present but in the future. In other words, a process of self-determination, that places us in the future; filling it so as not to fear it. When I think of repetition I think of concrete poetry, anaphora, conversation, krautrock, of beach combing, Bach, relationships, yoga, meditation, domesticity, desire, fucking, devotion, discovery, commitment, discipline, confidence...things and people, I love. I see repetition as a practise of devotion; both an anchor and a pursuit, a paradox.

The continuous present is a concept or approach or methodology by Gertrude Stein which she described as 'everything being the same everything being different'. You only need to read a small sample of her work to understand this as a literal description of her process. Stein subverted the rigidity of formal grammatical constructions to stretch and play with meaning. She ridiculed these systems of sanitised language and luxuriated on single words, on phrases, on sentences, repeating them, adding to them, subtracting from them. She rendered existing frameworks meaningless and still made sense through a rhythmic sensuality. In a way, Stein suspends time within her words or at least queers it. Deviating from its linear form of relentless progression. It forces the reader to linger rather than move on, to allow meaning to become, rather than explaining it. It feels connected to the work of Hélène Cixous, who in her 1976 essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* introduced her concept of l'écriture féminine or women's writing. Which by necessity, existed beyond the boundaries of grammatical laws and masculine constructs of control that constrained women into flattened stereotypes. Both these concepts use repetition as a tool of practise to create difference, to build or develop or become slowly, from within themselves in an almost continuous flow.

Yoga practitioners step onto their mat in full appreciation and acceptance that their body, their breath, their practise will not be the same each day despite repeating the same sequence of postures and are encouraged to pay attention to these differences without judgement. To listen to their bodies; their thoughts; their feelings throughout the moving meditation and take that awareness out with them into the world and their daily lives. This process of repetition, of awareness, creates an interior stillness. A familiarity and sense of security that awakens the mind body continuum. It gives the practitioner something that is their own. A commitment to actively engaging with this familiar and ever-changing practise. Of course, some step on the mat and find it unbearingly boring 'it's always the same', but then, those practitioners are missing the point. The present can be overwhelming, the future terrifying, the past distracting. When writing about people Stein found the act of remembering to be cataclysmic to her writing process. Taking her out of the present. The past blocking her flow and the automatic state she liked to work from. It's Stein's understanding and appreciation of our need to be present in the moment continuously so as not to get knocked off course that resulted in this process. We can only create in the present, so Stein elongates each moment, each word, each work into something continuous in order to live through her practise, her self-determination, into the future. Focusing on the immediate work, the immanence, in order to transcend. It's a prioritisation of process over product. Of the journey rather than the destination.

The word 'Practising' is used by Antonia Pont in *A Philosophy of Practising* as a means of naming a distinct way we approach what we do but not everything we do. She discusses the way in which practising can be multimodal, that the way we approach our primary practice, can be applied to anything. For example, a sculptor can approach cooking with the same care and engagedness as they do their art. Therefore, a practise is more about process than progress, pleasure as opposed to work. Verb not noun. Practise as opposed to practice. The content of which is interchangeable as long as it is approached in the same way; lovingly; exploringly; devotedly. Through this way of practising we create a place where our interior and exterior worlds converge, merge. A place of familiarity and newness. In an interview with Art21 the artist Sophie Calle talks about the boring things being necessary for her. The boring things being immanent work like washing the floor. She describes it as mindless, a place where she gets to think, where ideas come to her, in other words part of her process. The immanence facilitating the transcendence.

The rejection of repetition feels like a false privilege available only to someone entirely unattached to anyone; anything; any responsibility; any care. Something for the roamers; the wanderers; the avoidants. While embracing repetition feels almost radical in its commitment to process; to deepening understanding. It is radical in its rejection of societal pressures to keep moving forward, to focus on the future, to change rather than become. The way I see it, is that the immanent work has to be done in order for the transcendent work to be possible, there is no short cut. Or there is. But if you take it you won't necessarily have the stamina or self-awareness/determination to sustain the transcendence without having passed through the immanence; the repetition; the discipline. It's about being present, fully present, to avoid the repetitiveness in repetition. Through embracing repetition within our practises we're committing to sustaining a consistency free from outward pressures. Strengthening the bond between our inside and outside selves, creating our own portals of intentionality that extend our present, the moment, into an eternity.

Lucy Swan

## Reading list

*A Philosophy of Practising with Deleuze's 'Difference and Repetition'* by Antonia Pont

*Difference and Repetition* by Gilles Deleuze

*Picasso* by Gertrude Stein

*Tender Buttons* by Gertrude Stein

*The Laugh of Medusa* by Hélène Cixous

*The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir





IT DOESN'T HARDER ONE TO BE SOFT  
IT'S NOT MEANT TO BE EASY  
IT'S NOT WAS BE REAL  
IT INDIFFERENCE IS AGONY TO RECEIVE  
INDIFFERENCE IS THE ANTITHESIS OF COOL  
INDIFFERENCE FRIENDSHIPS SHOULD BE LOVE  
INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE COMPULSORY  
INTERGENERATIONAL VOLUNTEER THAN TO FORCED  
IT'S BETTER TO COVER FALL IN LOVE  
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE BY ITS HIGHEST A PLACE TO START  
JUDGING A BOOK THE COVER IS STATE OF BEING  
KINDNESS IS THE HIGHEST SAME AS YOURSELF  
KNOW KNOWING NAME IS NOT THE SAME AS UNDERSTANDING  
KNOWLEDGE IS THE IS CALLING HOME GENERATIONAL  
LANDLORDS SHOULD BE CALLED PROVIDERS  
LANDLORDS SHOULD BE CALLED HOME PROVIDERS  
EXIST  
LAUGHING MAKES IT ALL LIGHTER IF ONLY BRIEFLY  
LANGUAGE IS THE FROM A PARADOX  
LEARN LEARN THE SONIC TEXTURES CHILDREN  
LEARN LISTEN TO COMMUNICATE NIGHTTIME  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE ANCIENT COMPASSIONATELY  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE OF SOUNDS  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE ANCIENT UNEXPECTED  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE OF SEA  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE OF TREES  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE OF WIND  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE OF LIGHT  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE OF DARKNESS  
LISTEN LISTEN TO THE BIRDS THEY'RE OF KNOWN  
LONELINESS IS THE LACK OF LANGUAGE BEING STRANDED  
LONELINESS IS NOT THE SAME AS SOLITUDE BEING SIMILAR  
LONELINESS IS NOT THE SAME AS SOLITUDE BEING INEVITABLE  
LOSING LOOK THEM IN THE AWAY  
LOOK LOOK THEM IN THE DOWN  
LOOK LOVE IS GREAT PLACE IS TO EYE  
LOVE LOVE LANGUAGE IS CAN AN TO UP  
LOVE LOVE TRY GO  
LOVE LOVE DUND TRUTH  
LOVE LOVE ORLDS IT

NORMALCY IS A IT NATURALISED COCAINE  
NORMALITY IS WITH THEM  
NOTICE THE WORLD AROUND YOU THE A CONSTRUCT  
NOT ALL MEN WORLD YOU'RE A FANTASY  
NOT EVERYONE SEES BUT ALWAYS PART OF  
NOT EVERYTHING THAT COLOUR IN THE SAME MEN  
NOT EXISTS GOES AROUND COMES WAY  
OF COURSE BEYOND RIVERS THE AROUND  
OF COURSE MOUNTAINS ARE MOMENT  
OFTEN COURSE EARTH ARE LIVING  
ONE IN OUR MUST HUMAN ATTRIBUTES IS LIVING  
OUR THREE WOMEN ARE SENTIENT

## ***1001 Over Simplifications***

2025

## Collaborative work with Lucy Swan

110 x 24 cm each piece

POA



## ***Divergences (1)***

2025

Archival pigment print on cotton rag

Hand-finished cherry frame, museum mount, ArtGlass AR70

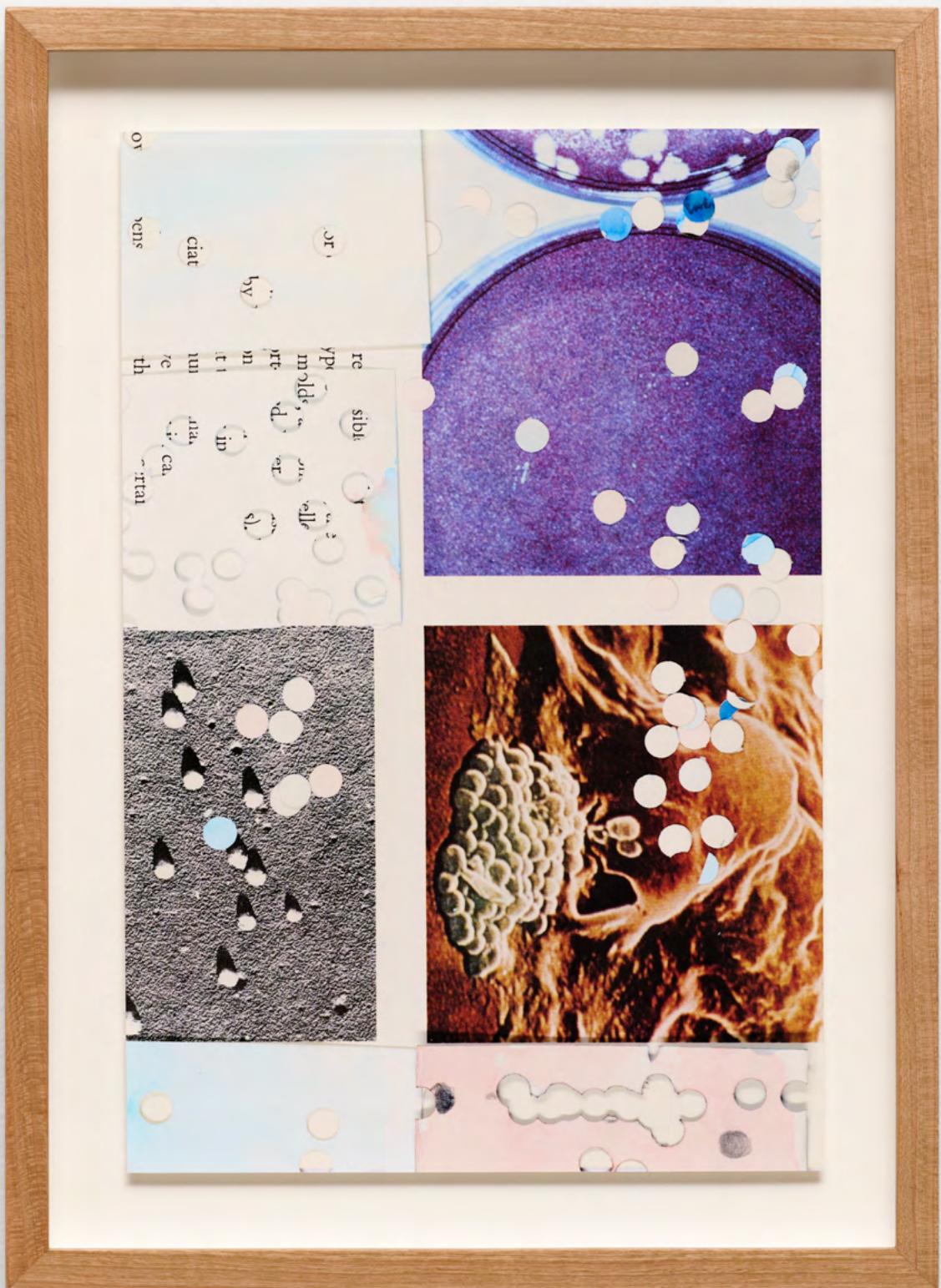
30 x 41.7 cm

Edition 1/3 + 2 AP

\$1,200

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shown to cause tu-  
irus has been pro-  
though viruses ha-

ric



## ***Divergences (2)***

2025

Archival pigment print on cotton rag

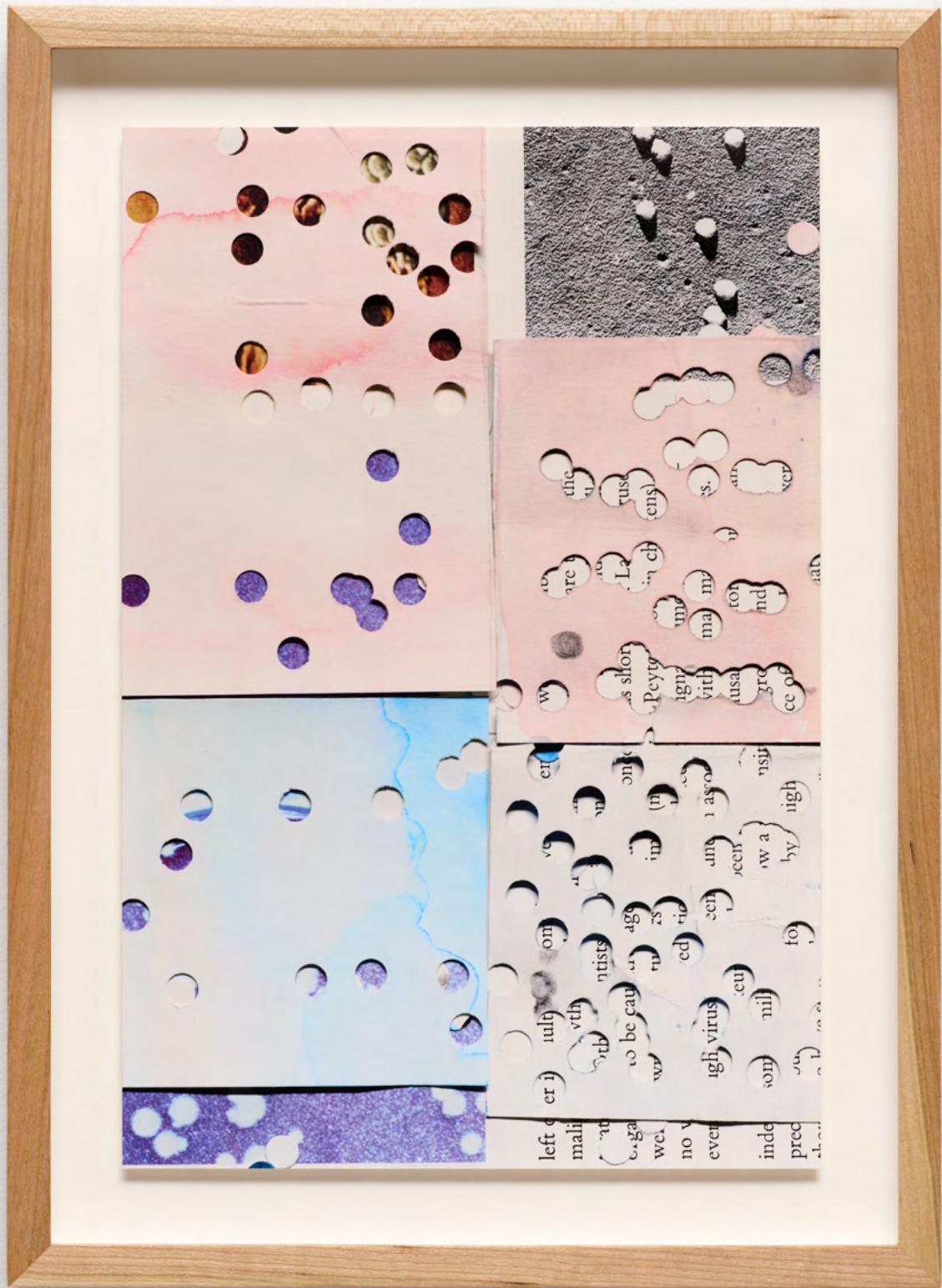
Hand-finished cherry frame, museum mount, ArtGlass AR70

30 x 41.7 cm

Edition 1/3 + 2 AP

\$1,200





### **Divergences (3)**

2025

Archival pigment print on cotton rag

Hand-finished cherry frame, museum mount, ArtGlass AR70

30 x 41.7 cm

Edition 1/3 + 2 AP

\$1,200



### **Divergences (4)**

2025

Archival pigment print on cotton rag

Hand-finished cherry frame, museum mount, ArtGlass AR70

30 x 41.7 cm

Edition 1/3 + 2 AP

\$1,200





***Blind spots in the linear trajectory (1)***

2025

Silver gelatin print on fibre matte paper (multiple exposures)

Hand-finished white lacquered oak frame, raised float mount, ArtGlass AR70

33.2 x 40.8 cm

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

\$1,600 each or \$3,000 pair



***Blind spots in the linear trajectory (2)***

2025

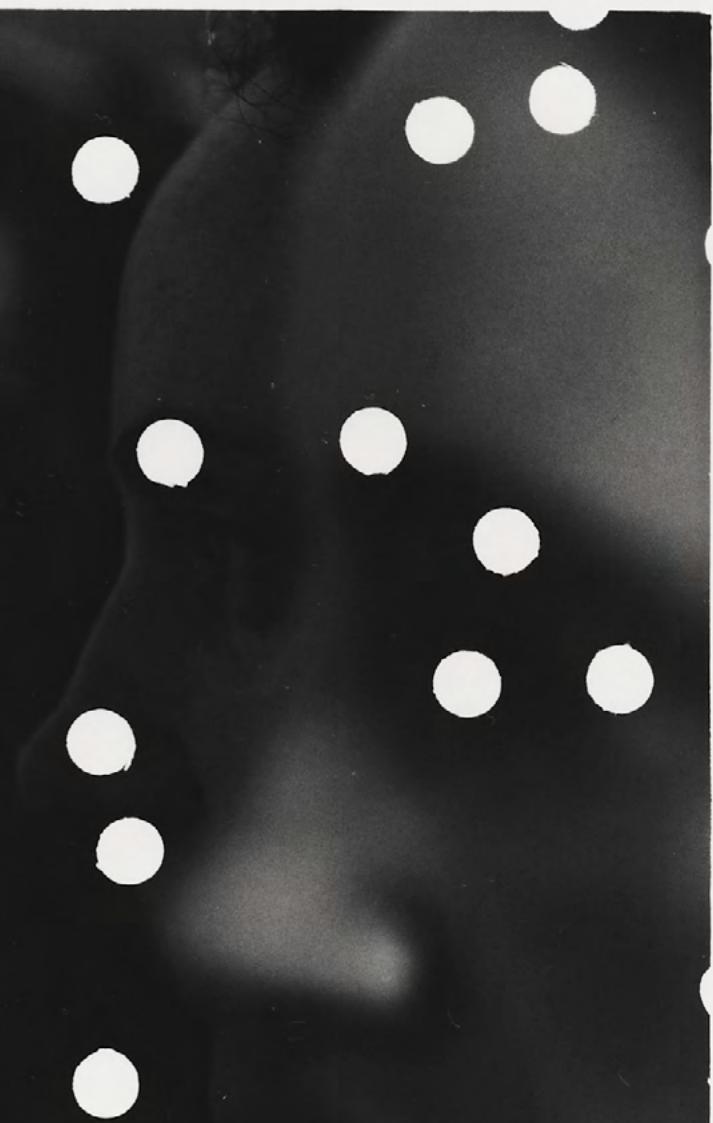
Silver gelatin print on fibre matte paper (multiple exposures)

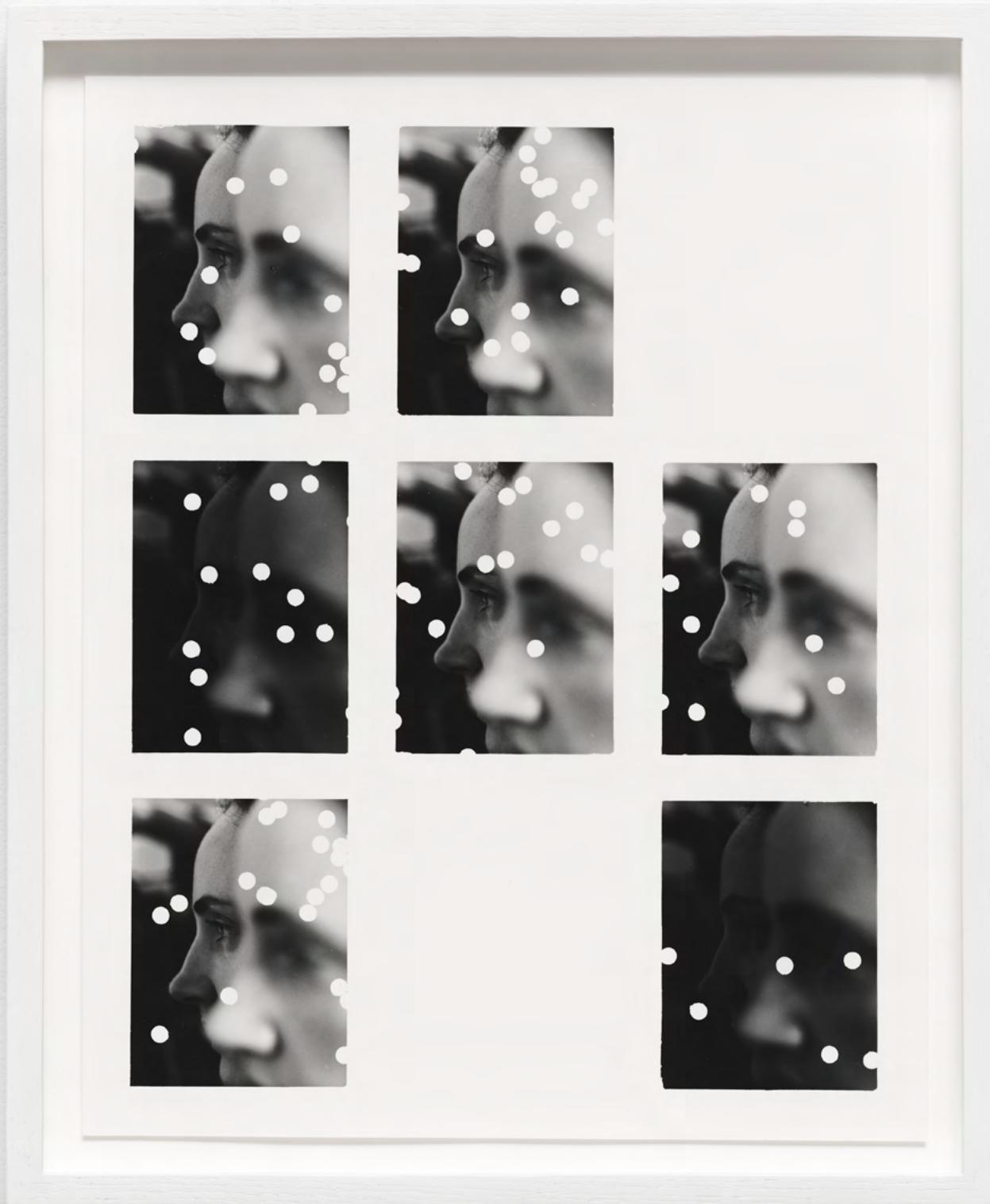
Hand-finished white lacquered oak frame, raised float mount, ArtGlass AR70

33.2 x 40.8 cm

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

\$1,600 each or \$3,000 pair





### ***Diplopia (1)***

2025

Silver gelatin print on fibre matte paper (multiple exposures)

Hand-finished white lacquered oak frame, raised float mount, ArtGlass AR70

33.2 x 40.8 cm

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

\$1,600 each or \$3,000 pair



### ***Diplopia (2)***

2025

Silver gelatin print on fibre matte paper (multiple exposures)

Hand-finished white lacquered oak frame, raised float mount, ArtGlass AR70

33.2 x 40.8 cm

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

\$1,600 each or \$3,000 pair





### **Divergences (5)**

2025

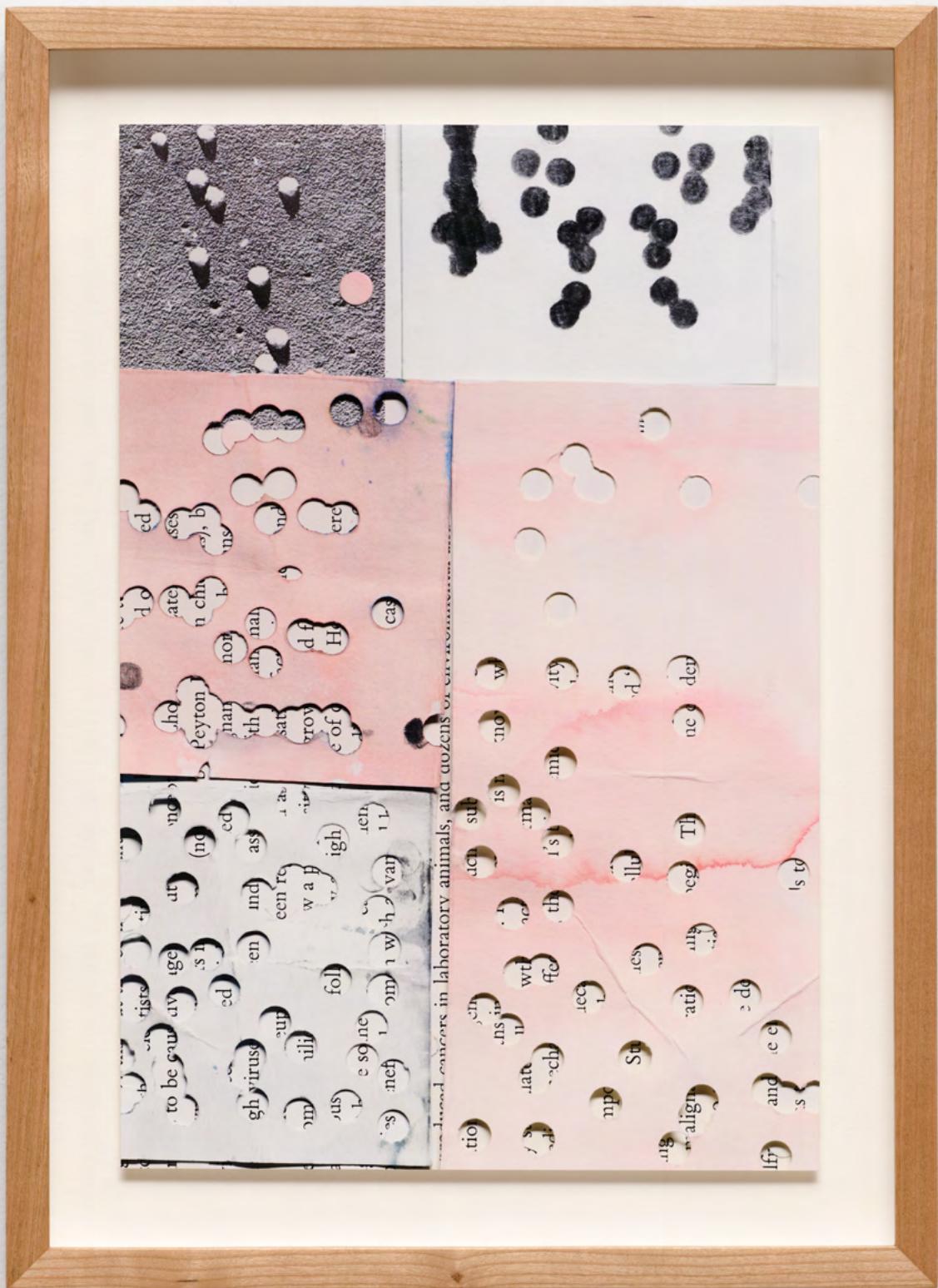
Archival pigment print on cotton rag

Hand-finished cherry frame, museum mount, ArtGlass AR70

30 x 41.7 cm

Edition 1/3 + 2 AP

\$1,200



## Divergences (6)

2025

Archival pigment print on cotton rag

Hand-finished cherry frame, museum mount, ArtGlass AR70

30 x 41.7 cm

Edition 1/3 + 2 AP

\$1,200



***Everything's the Same, Everything's Different***

2025

Repurposed antique teak doors, sanded, stained,  
CNC-cut circular forms, with custom legs

Freestanding sculpture

165 x 54 x 25 cm each

\$4,200 each or \$8,000 pair



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**LAILA.**