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Review: Stephanie Washburn marks a mysteriously inviting solo debut

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Stephanie Washburn, "Reception 120," 2011. (Mark Moore Gallery)

The 12 digitally printed photographs in **Stephanie Washburn's** solo debut at Mark Moore Gallery are mysterious messes that make you look closely. They also invite you to ponder big questions about the nature of reality and art's place in it. Such heavy-duty philosophizing is rarely handled with Washburn's light touch, which leaves plenty of room for viewers who like DIY discoveries.

In each of her pictures, the visible world seems to have dissolved into a faded version of itself, like an all-but-lost memory or a digital transmission on the fritz. The blurriness is broken by unrelated images whose vividness makes them seem to belong to another order of reality. The overall impression is that of a computer's software getting clogged, like a drain, and backing up the kitchen sink with chunks of stuff you thought you were done with.

Washburn gets this effect via the simplest of means. Using margarine and butter, she sticks flowers, feathers, bread and spaghetti, as well as potatoes, fake fur, window cleaner and plastic wrap to the screen of her TV. She then photographs scenes from her favorite programs as her misbegotten still lifes slide slowly down the screen.

The absurdity at the heart of Washburn's photographs recalls Robert Heinecken's wacky mash-ups of the mass media. More important, Washburn's weirdly pretty pictures give sharp form to the blurry boundary between the virtual world and the real one, wherever it might be.

Mark Moore Gallery, 5790 Washington Blvd., (310) 453-3031, through May 19. Closed Sundays and Mondays.
www.markmooregallery.com

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