

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Karen Rosenberg, "A Painter's Social Network, Traced in Her Photographs," *New York Times*, July 1, 2008

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A Painter's Social Network, Traced in Her Photographs

RIDGEFIELD, Conn. — Elizabeth Peyton's endearing, jewel-like portraits are frequently, and transparently, based on photographic ephemera: newspaper

ART REVIEW

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images, film stills, vintage black-and-white prints. Her own snapshots, taken over the last two decades with 35-millimeter, Polaroid and, most recently, digital cameras, are an important but rarely acknowledged source.

Some 50 photographs by Ms. Peyton are now on view here at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in "Elizabeth Peyton: Portrait of an Artist." Ms. Peyton, born in Danbury, Conn., is the recipient of the 2006 Larry Aldrich Award (honoring an artist who has had "a significant impact on visual culture"). Some might say that her paintings of friends, lovers and famous faces reflect rather than influence that culture; they are steeped in the elixirs of youth, beauty and celebrity infatuation.

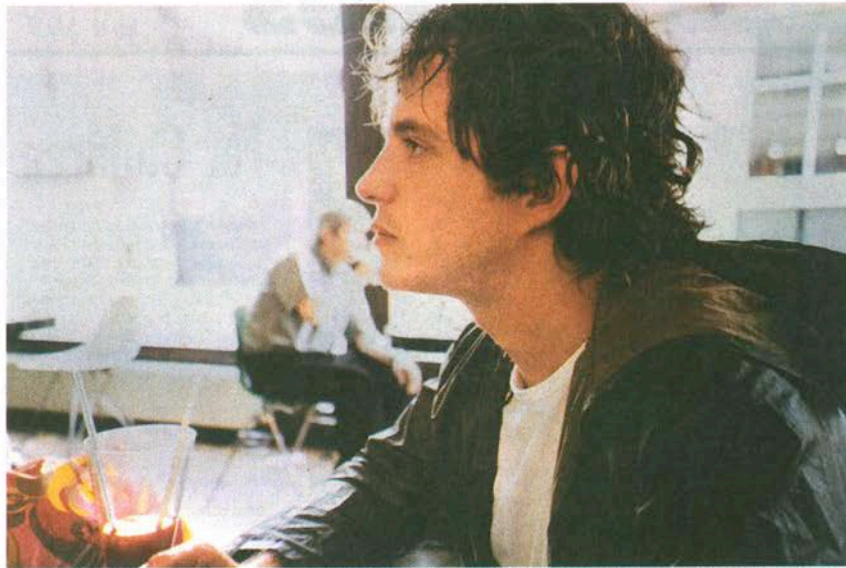
With a Peyton survey scheduled to open in Manhattan at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in October, the Aldrich's exhibition tries to deconstruct the mystique surrounding Ms. Peyton's paintings, emphasizing her social-documentary ambitions rather than her technical facility or fan-girl romanticism.

The title is misleading — this is a portrait of a scene, not a self. A photograph at the entrance to the exhibition shows Ms. Peyton taking a snapshot into a mirror, hiding beneath the flashbulb glare and a pair of reflective sunglasses. That is about as much of her as we see.

Ms. Peyton cites as inspiration the studio portraiture of Nadar, Alfred Stieglitz and Robert Mapplethorpe, who all photographed their friends and intimates. Her own aesthetic is much more casual, even amateurish. Photographs (particularly those taken with nondigital cameras) are under- or overexposed, badly composed and out of focus.

Ms. Peyton's social compass, however, is as finely calibrated in this group of works as it is in her paintings. Her photographs cap-

"Elizabeth Peyton: Portrait of an Artist" continues through Nov. 16 at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 258 Main Street, Ridgefield, Conn.; (203) 438-4519, aldrichart.org.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ELIZABETH PEYTON AND GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE, NEW YORK

Elizabeth Peyton: Portrait of an Artist "Tony Just, London" (2000) is at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.

ture young, scruffy denizens of the art world on the move (between fairs and biennials, or studios in New York, London and Berlin). Several photographs were taken on trains and buses; others at hotels (the Chateau Marmont, for example) and weekend enclaves (Cutchogue, N.Y.). Exhaustion is palpable, but so is an atmosphere of bohemian bonhomie.

Richard Klein, director of exhibitions at the Aldrich, writes in the show's brochure that Ms. Peyton's photographs are "acts of devotion based in a Platonic eros." That description seems better suited to her paintings. Ms. Peyton photographs with the acquisitive determination of someone amassing Facebook friends. The lines of her social network can be traced to her galleries: Gavin Brown's Enterprise in New York and Sadie Coles HQ in London. Here are Gavin Brown and Rirkrit Tiravanija; there's Rirkrit again, with Olafur Eliasson; and that's Urs Fischer; and Franz Ackermann.

This mix of artists and dealers (most of them are not exactly household names) is enhanced by the occasional celebrity: Marc Jacobs, Chloë Sevigny. (Ms. Peyton's shots sometimes bring to mind the studied insouciance of Mr. Jacobs's advertising cam-

paign photographed by Juergen Teller.)

Again and again her camera seeks out pale young men with mussed hair. Her subjects include the elfin-featured Nick Relph (of the British art duo Payne and Relph); Craig Wadlin, a raffish artist who is platinum-blond in some photographs and raven-haired in others; and

Spencer Sweeney, an artist, musician and nightlife impresario, looking perpetually hung over. In a picture taken at Liverpool Street Station in London, Mr. Sweeney shrouds himself with his black leather jacket.

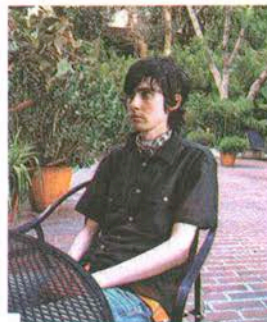
Less frequently, Ms. Peyton photographs men of greater maturity and gravitas. The art dealer Colin de Land, who died in 2003, is one compelling example; another is the artist Matthew Barney. In his art Mr. Barney controls and transforms his own image to exacting standards. Here he is simply another guest at Ms. Peyton's metaphorical dinner party.

As revealing as this photograph is, it can't measure up to her paintings of Mr. Barney exhibited this spring at Gavin Brown's Enterprise. The same might be said of other photographs at the Aldrich — pictures of Ms. Peyton's lover Tony Just and her friend Pati Hertling — that have most likely served as source material.

"Portrait of an Artist" extends the promise of a less fussy, more authentic Peyton, but it certainly doesn't strip her paintings of their mysterious aura. Admirers will be left wondering how Ms. Peyton's brushwork converts her awkward photographs into graceful, intuitive portraits.

ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW

Additional images from "Elizabeth Peyton" at the Aldrich Museum: nytimes.com/design



"Nick Relph at the Chateau Marmont" is part of the show.