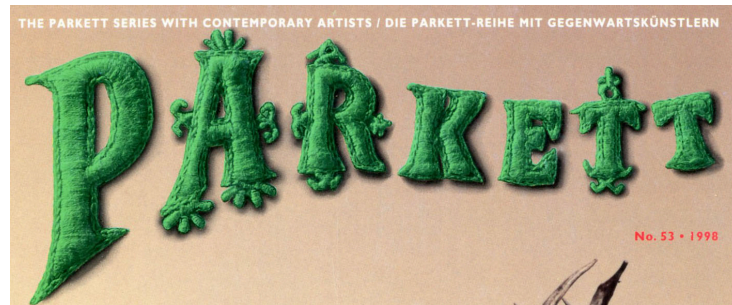
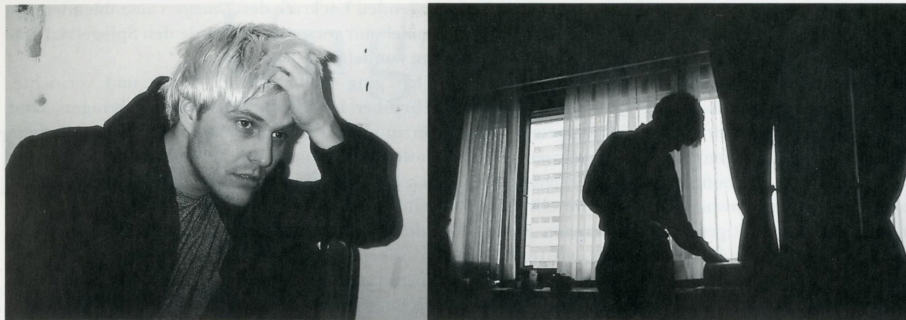


# GLADSTONE GALLERY



Elizabeth Peyton



ELIZABETH PEYTON, CRAIG, 1997, color photographs / Farbphotographien.

LINDA PILGRIM

## An Interview with a Painter's Model

*Linda Pilgrim:* How many times has Elizabeth painted you?

*Craig Wadlin:* Dozens.

*LP:* What do you think made Elizabeth want to paint you?

*CW:* I guess it was the way I was shaking my beer and spraying it into the crowd at an opening.

*LP:* Do you think that there was something purely visual?

*CW:* Well, I was wearing a scarf ... I think it was the scarf.

*LP:* But there was something that struck her about you. What do you think it is?

*CW:* Sometimes Elizabeth's paintings are of historical figures before they become famous; for example, Elvis as a child, or caterpillars before they turn into butterflies. Maybe she thinks that I'll turn into something.

*LP:* She told me that there is something that really draws her to the people she paints. Do you see anything of yourself in any of the other people she paints?

*CW:* Not really. I think that Elizabeth does though. I went with her to Tokyo and listened to her speak about her painting. I think it has a lot to do with the act of painting; where you're sitting in a room by yourself, maybe listening to music, staring at this one small space, a board or canvas, and you are trying to

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create a whole atmosphere. It's disproportionately time-consuming. You get really absorbed, kind of lost, when you paint, whether you're working from a photograph or translating one image into another, or working from memory. So I think Elizabeth's understanding of history is her understanding of history as a painter. She'll fantasize about a character like the Queen or Napoleon or Elvis or whoever, and imagine them abstracted from time and space—as pure images. They achieve a kind of perfection or idealism that she likes to see in people. It's a sweet and generous understanding of people. It's a kind of connection to a time, her own time, but it's also fairly hermetic. She's not a Pop artist in the same way that Warhol was. It has more to do with people who have some meaning to her or people in whom she sees a quality that she can abstract into an ideal. So, I think it mostly has to do with Elizabeth herself being the common ground.

**LP:** But your look, in particular, is consistent with that of some of Elizabeth's other subjects. I saw a watercolor that she is working on of Lord Alfred Douglas and it looks just like you.

**CW:** Yes, and I bet it looks like some of her other paintings too. The other night I saw Pulp perform, and Jarvis Cocker looked exactly like Elizabeth's painting of him, like a human zigzag.

**LP:** She almost always paints males, and they have a certain kind of look. Maybe it's partly objective and partly subjective in terms of her relation to each person. Would this apply to you?

**CW:** I guess so. She paints certain living people in their twenties or thirties, she paints singers and artists...

**LP:** What does it feel like to be someone who a painter wants to paint over and over again—to be a "muse"?

**CW:** It's a little weird. I don't paint people's pictures, so it's not a mutual thing that we have an understanding about. But I just do it to help her out.

**LP:** Elizabeth has said that she is trying to capture something that is fleeting, the way a person looks at a certain time because of what they're experiencing.

**CW:** I think that's largely what it's about for her to be making paintings. It's something you experience when you look at vintage photographs or family

Kurt Cobain during the "Nevermind" sessions, August 1991 / Kurt Cobain während der "Nevermind"-Aufnahmen im August 1991.  
(PHOTO: M. LINNSEN/REDFERNS/RETINA PICTURES FROM COBAIN BY THE EDITORS OF ROLLING STONE, NY: ROLLING STONE PRESS, 1994)



snapshots from the 1970s: The film looks different; the shape of the picture might be different; the clothing, the whole thing. It's nostalgic. Elizabeth's work has that same luminous quality. It's an alien quality in the same way that a photograph from the 1970s would look kind of alien. Not like in real life.

**LP:** What do you think she is trying to recapture?

**CW:** Take her painting LIAM & NOEL IN THE 70S (1997), of the boys from Oasis when they were kids. It's hard to imagine the now-Number One pop band in England when they were unsuccessful drunks: This is a transitory quality that Elizabeth recaptures. Or Kurt Cobain at his most decadent moment. Or the Sex Pistols: She reduces her recollection of Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious to its elements so that the picture is just about a moment between two friends. No suggestion of the music industry, nothing political, no kind of realistic understanding of consumption, no external issues at all.

**LP:** It's interesting that she has been attracted to these subjects at the peak of their careers but in her paintings of them chooses to focus on their formative years, before they became famous. But you described the inverse in the beginning of our conversation when you said that Elizabeth might be painting you because one day you might "turn into something." In other words she's also painting you at a formative stage. The difference is that you're currently in that moment—she doesn't have to go back in time.



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ELIZABETH PEYTON, TOKYO (CRAIG), 1997,  
oil on board, 10 x 8" / TOKIO (CRAIG), Öl auf Malkarton, 25,4 x 20,3 cm.