

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Leffingwell, Edward. "Jean-Luc Mylayne at Barbara Gladstone", *Art in America*, October 1999.

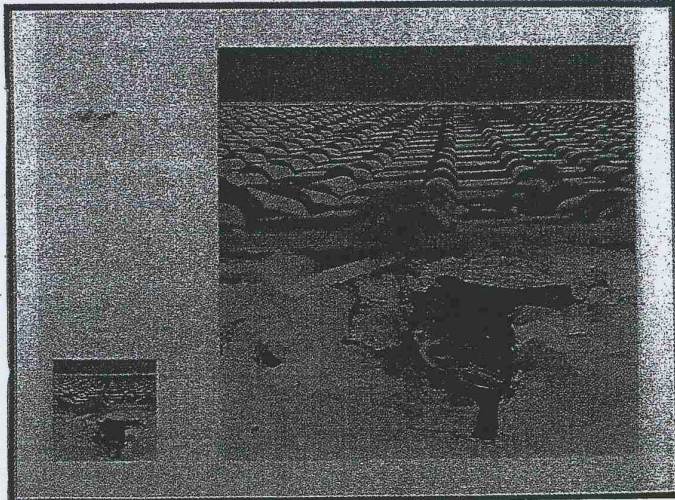
Jean-Luc Mylayne at Barbara Gladstone

Jean-Luc Mylayne's avian photographs are documents of site and time. During his walks in

the European countryside, he patiently observes a variety of common birds in bucolic habitats. Particular ones are watched over extended periods of time, as though the shutter speed of Mylayne's attention could be calibrated in months rather than in fractions of a second. It is the individual bird that defines the purpose of his project as it goes about its business in flight, feeding or sometimes perched close at hand, cocking an eye, its gaze specific.

Although there are exceptions, Mylayne generally exhibits large matted C-prints, each titled with a cataloguing number followed by the month (or months) and year given to its pursuit. He generally limits the production of an image to a single example. He is interested in the absolute and fleeting presence of the bird, not in its depiction. In *No. 2^e Juin Juillet 1979*, it's hard to know if the gathered mottling of light and shade in the foreground is a bird at all, nearly invisible as it is in a hedgerow. Even single blades of grass and the cattle in the next field seem more clearly defined. The image is the culmination of two months of attention.

Jean-Luc Mylayne: *No. 27 Juin Juillet Août, 1981*, two C-prints, 48 1/2 by 64 1/2 inches overall; at Barbara Gladstone.



A compelling series of four photographs, *No. 118 Août-Septembre 1992* through *No. 121 Août-Septembre 1992*, depicts a habitat that includes an unpaved roadway in the foreground and beyond, a flatbed trailer, a forklift, several large bales of hay, a Quonset-shaped mound covered with dark plastic sheeting and a stand of trees. A particular bird darts and rolls, coming and going in incidental displays of muscularity and grace. In one work from this series, Mylayne introduces two prints of what appears to be the same image, one large and one much smaller. No hierarchy of experience is implied, but as the larger version seems less clear by reason of its enlargement, the smaller takes on a sharpness that suggests an alteration of the camera's focus in a discernible interstice between two moments. The other months of moments the photographs in this series may recall belong to the history of the bird and its habitat, which is to say, to no expressible history at all. *Carpe diem*, Mylayne says, giving much and asking for as little as he takes. —Edward Leffingwell