

GLADSTONE GALLERY

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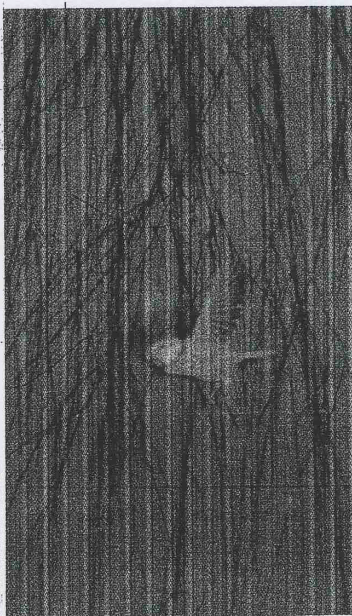
Art | Listings

Jean-Luc Mylayne
Barbara Gladstone Gallery,
through Aug 15 (See Chelsea).

French photographer Jean-Luc Mylayne stakes out a site for months on end to shoot a single image of a bird in its natural habitat. (Since 1976, he's produced less than 200 pictures.) This nomadic working method may conjure an avian version of Jeff Corwin's croc stalking, but Mylayne's feathered grail is less exotic. He favors backyard birds—starlings, sparrows, robins—portrayed not as zoom-lens pinups for wildlife calendars (what art critic Ralph Rugoff calls "eco-porn"), but as incidental aspects of an ordinary landscape. In one image, a tiny dun-colored specimen perches on rusted machinery; in another, a kingfisher is nearly camouflaged by a blur of green reeds. Like everyday life, these pictures are at once uneventful and deeply engrossing.

In this show, Mylayne introduces a new location, the domestic interior, where he meets with less success. A black-and-white drawing of a bird on a branch in silhouette rests on a carpeted floor—a heavy-handed echo of the blink-and-you'll-miss-it bird, barely visible through the window in a patio shrub. Elsewhere, a small silver sphere rests at the foot of a red chair across from a blue ash-tray. (It looks like a photo shoot styled by Ingmar Bergman.) Though these images are more stilted than their outdoor counterparts, they are still arresting. Ultimately, Mylayne's subject isn't nature at all, but rather the act of viewing. Photography and bird watching are both waiting games. In the hands of a master like Mylayne, they can slow down time, revealing mysteries the less patient among us might pass by.

—Andrea Scott



Jean-Luc Mylayne, *N° 63 Janvier*
Fevrier 1987, 1987.

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