

# KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

## Flash Art

**Melanie Schiff: Kavi Gupta - Berlin**  
**Laura Schleussner**  
**2011**



Atmospheric, light-infused and highly evocative of the moment, Melanie Schiff's photographs recall modern traditions of American romantic photography (Robert Frank and Lee Friedlander come readily to mind). Unlike these photographers, Schiff is more interested in observing transient moments that suggest youth culture and an alternative milieu. Staged individual portraits, still-lives with beer bottles, CDs or decaying plants, a hotel room once occupied by Kurt Cobain, album covers floating in an abandoned pool – too open-ended to be a personal chronicle, Schiff's imagery has an immersive, ambient quality. Multiple references to music and pop icons suggest a sound track that is somehow imbedded in the images and that becomes stronger and more compelling when multiple photographs are brought together.

For her first solo exhibition in Germany at Kavi Gupta, Schiff shows only seven moderately-sized photographs taken while on residency at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas. In comparison to earlier works, these are more still, almost silent. The images are also imbued with a certain minimalism, which is perhaps inspired by the context of Donald Judd's former living and workspace. Like the minimalists, Schiff turns her attention towards the landscape and seemingly abandoned spaces, yet she counters all notions of purism and perfection. Nature is the subject of most photographs, but always as touched by human hand. An outcropping of rock bears a spray of graffiti; decaying silk flowers are superimposed over a field of grass; Halley's comet appears merely as a poster hung on an unused door.

There is something highly introverted about this collection of works, whose concentrated field of vision never pulls back to show the landscape. Several photographs inhabit a rough, white-washed interior with an opaque window giving no hint of the world outside. The only creature seeming to populate the space is a tiny spider clutching her eggs against a brilliantly white wall that has been irreverently dirtied by her tiny brown droppings.

TEL 212-352-9700 FAX 212-352-9704

[www.katewerblegallery.com](http://www.katewerblegallery.com) EMAIL [info@katewerblegallery.com](mailto:info@katewerblegallery.com)