

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013



Melanie Schiff
John McKinnon
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The exhibition "Underwater Photographer" presents a portrait of a young woman living the rock & roll lifestyle. Melanie Schiff performs in front of the camera by spitting water at the viewer, reclining naked while covered in mud and holding a Neil Young album. Never documenting a real event, she poses in fabricated solitary scenarios. Her stills of objects are equally constructed; CD cases and other mundane items of youth culture are neatly arranged. Schiff composes these poetic settings through a first-person view that reflects an independent spirit. Her images of beer cans, alcohol bottles and small baggies associated with drugs romanticize a carefree, altered state. In *Lagoon*, an empty bottle lit with glowsticks rests on the hull of a boat, as if it is leading us into the dark, murky body of water. Another photo captures a whiskey bottle with the word *emergency* scrawled across in black marker. The image celebrates drunken stupor through a dazzling light emanating from the top of the bottle, as if Jack Daniel's leads towards transcendence. Schiff's artificial environments rejoice in the self-destruction associated with rebellion, but it would be wrong to equate them with defiance. Instead, her photos are meditative reflections that embrace simple moments of beauty. In this respect, the casual subjects of a windowsill or an empty studio excel beyond derived unruly performances.

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