

"The Photographer's Wife" by Laura Heyman (USA)



Opening the 29th of March 12-15

Open Saturdays 12-15 and Sundays 14-17

The last day the 27th of April 2008

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The images in Laura Heyman's series present a female subject gazing intimately at the camera, suggesting that the artist is making images of their lover. As Heyman embodies both roles at once, this creates a fictionalized photographer as well as a fictionalized subject. The model/subject's job is always performative - she must be able to portray not only the true self, but also the ideal. In the case of these photographs, however, the problem is slightly more complicated. As the model/subject, Heyman must convey not only the true self and the ideal, but also reflect back to the viewer an imagined photographer/husband.

For her exhibition at Senko Studio, Heyman builds on this semi-fictional exchange by adding a wall text and a film. The text piece is a letter from the model to a friend, describing her collaboration with an unnamed artist on a series of photographs. A 16mm film continues the narrative, featuring Heyman in a pastoral landscape, being directed through a series of poses by someone off-screen.

In making use of this visual trope, Heyman appropriates the male gaze and examines the history of images made by male artists of their wives and lovers. More specifically, she references portraits of Edith Gowin, Eleanor Callahan and Maria Friedlander while playing with various photographic conventions, such as travel and sensual imagery.

For both artist and model, the act of portrayal is one of transport, a way to slip into another world. In this space photography becomes a sort of travel, through which both parties are transformed. Part of the exchange between artist and model is the process of imposing one identity on another. Ultimately Heyman's project illustrates the artist's desire to own his subject, and the subject's dual need to exploit and resist that desire.