

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Gagosian Hosts Peyton's First Solo Show in Paris



Elizabeth Peyton's "Klara," 2010.

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Gagosian Gallery
Paris

The American painter Elizabeth Peyton is enjoying her first solo show in Paris at the Gagosian Gallery, spotlighting new paintings and drawings, through July 28. The gallery's polished, high-ceilinged space (4 rue Ponthieu; 33-1-45-63-98-06; www.gagosian.com) may seem like an odd fit with Ms. Peyton's small-scale, tightly framed portraits, but the power of her intimate style holds up in the gallery.

Early in her career, in 1993, Ms. Peyton had a smaller-scale space to work with: that show was hung in a room at the Chelsea Hotel in New York; to gain access, viewers had to ask the reception desk for the room key. Ms. Peyton, who studied at the School of Visual Arts in the late '80s, has since had a radical increase in visibility, culminating in an expansive solo show, "Live Forever," at the New Museum in 2008 and 2009; the show went on to tour in the U.S. and in Europe.

Ms. Peyton's work is something of a visual shrine to cult figures that populate the media, and photographs often serve as her source material. The attractive, waifish silhouettes in her paintings range from artist friends in her entourage to famous musicians (Jarvis Cocker, Kurt Cobain, Julian Casablancas) to monarchs and well-known political figures (Ludwig II of Bavaria, Abraham Lincoln, Napoleon).

Many of her subjects are saddled with a particular (read: tabloid-riddled) legacy, yet her depictions manage to infuse these figures with a distinct mystique, one that feels divorced from hype. The focus, instead, is on a pure physical aura, which the artist renders with a light hand, using supple lines and soft colors. Amid the new works exhibited, portraits of the Berlin-based artist Klara Liden (above) and the musician (and recent National Book Award winner) Patti Smith join the ranks of Ms. Peyton's carefully anointed cast of characters.