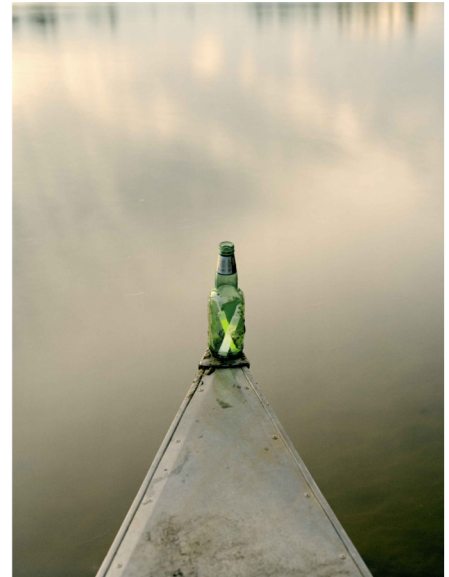


Chicago CRITICS' PICKS

Melanie Schiff
KAVI GUPTA GALLERY
835 West Washington
December 1–January 28, 2007



Lagoon, 2006, c-print, 40" x 30"

Since her solo debut at this gallery, photographer Melanie Schiff has moved out of the studio and into the world, trading fussily arranged, evenly lit still lifes for more casual, serendipitous compositions of everyday objects. These photos are hymns to natural light, and the presence of rainbows, beer cans, and a Neil Young LP cover tempts one to characterize her gaze as a stoner's glassy-eyed fixation. In *Emergency*, 2006, the sun, modulated by a porch screen, is a marble-size fireball resting atop a bottle of Jack Daniels. In another photograph, a single beam slices through a compact-disc jewel case, splitting into faint prisms that descend upon dull gray carpet. A third shows a green beer bottle balanced at the tip of a canoe, lit from within by two crisscrossed glow sticks; their angle continues the lines made by the edges of the thin-metal boat and is also found in the *X* composed of two arrows jutting from disused beer cans in a nearby picture. With sixteen photos and one unexpected (if not unwelcome) foray into video, the exhibition is a tad overhung, but even the oddball images—of the artist making *Spit Rainbow*, 2006, next to a backyard lemon tree, or a tapestry of drug bags plastered to a cracked window—add to the show's drowsy-afternoon allure.

—Brian Sholis