

**PATRICIA CROTTY: IN AND OUT OF FOCUS & BETTY GLICK: LAY OF THE LAND**

Galatea Fine Art • Boston, MA • [www.galateaart.org](http://www.galateaart.org) • June 1–26, 2011

Compliments are generally paid in person, though sometimes they come in print or even by accident. In any event, a connection needs to be formed, a delivery system established—even if unwittingly. In this exhibit, the connection is made with paintings in two separate shows that complement each other without washing out the clarity of the work or muddying up each artist's intent.

Betty Glick begins with a view of an unnamed city. In *Skyline* she crops what reminds one of a Soviet-style housing complex behind a manicured lawn and zigzagging

white roads or paths that, despite their allure, seem ominous and foreboding—leading everywhere and nowhere all at once. A mute yellowed sky stands above the city without commentary. Other works in the show take their cue from this painting, pausing, I think, to destabilize smaller things.



Patricia Crotty, *Flowers 9*, oil and charcoal on canvas 24 x 24".

*Ochre/Black Waterfront 2* is a smoky rendering that merely suggests a title, yet captures it fully before allowing it to disappear again. This play with focus and perspective is present in all of Glick's work as it glides off into a studied abstraction, allowing her audience a chance to find

narratives within the paint.

Patricia Crotty is equally adept at masking the commonplace—this after carefully distilling an object's vibrancy. Crotty takes a soft approach with a muted palette, and yet there remains in her work a distinct chaos. Shapes struggle against each other, while at the same time, supporting and curling together. *Flowers 9* features an array of flowers that almost swing out to greet the viewer, moving forward naturally, but with an animated force.

*Still Life with Flowers* is more direct and streamlined and also more abstract. Here, the artist uses a tighter form and there is a balled-up energy present that contradicts the perceived narrative of the work's title. Nothing is still and nothing is flowery.

Taken together, these two shows conform nicely with each other while refusing to conform to either space or design. The unruliness present here is both distinct and highly controlled, suggesting perhaps that subtlety has certain nobility.

—Robert Moeller

**BERENICE ABBOTT: PORTRAITS**

Dean's Gallery, Sloan School of Management, MIT • Cambridge, MA • [listart.mit.edu](http://listart.mit.edu) • Through June 17, 2011

Berenice Abbott's direct photographic style captures her subjects' personalities in these sixteen black-and-white silver gelatin prints. Abbott, born in Ohio, was first exposed to photography in 1923, working in Paris as an assistant to Man Ray. Three years later, she opened her own portrait studio.

These portraits, the majority taken in Paris, present a who's who of famous artists, writers, musicians, and intellectuals, including surrealist writer René Crevel, journalist Janet Flanner, American jazz drummer Charles "Buddy" Gilmore, and African American singer/songwriter Leadbelly. Other notables include Sylvia Beach, founder of Shakespeare and Company bookstore; poet Edna St. Vincent Millay; and philanthropist/social activist Dorothy Whitney. Favorites include artist Jean Cocteau in bed next to an expressionless mask, and the portrait of Princess Eugene Murat whose direct gaze, androgynous look, and thick-ringed fingers holding a cigarette is not what comes to mind when imagining a princess.

The portraits are beautifully lit, and Abbott was skilled in capturing the subtle nuances of

black, white, and shadow. Most subjects are seated in chairs but never appear stiff or rigid. A combination of Abbott's photographic style, the timeless quality of black-and-white images, and the unconventional subjects themselves creates photographic portraits that still look modern today.

French photographer Eugène Atget, Abbott's own inspiration, is sensitively presented in profile with sunken cheekbones and receding hair. Living in Montmartre at the turn of the century, Atget documented architectural details and buildings disappearing with gentrification. After Atget's death, Abbott bought many of his negatives.

These portraits, newly acquired, are now part of the MIT List Visual Arts Center Student



Berenice Abbott, *Princess Eugene Murat*, ca. 1928, 1976, gelatin silver print, 13½ x 10½".

Loan Art Collection. The collection includes more than 500 framed original works of art that are made available to MIT graduate and undergraduate students for loan each year.

While the show is noteworthy, only the most intrepid visitors will find the Dean's Gallery hidden on the fourth floor of the Sloan School of Management and open only during business hours. But those who persevere will be rewarded with

interesting photographs of often flamboyant, avant-garde artists of uncertain sexual orientation, hung outside the dean's offices.

—Susan Mulski