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NEW YORK, NY — Jen Bekman is pleased to present *A New American Portrait*, a group exhibition of photographs featuring artists at the vanguard of contemporary portraiture in America. Co-curated by Ms. Bekman and Jörg Colberg, editor of the influential fine art photography blog Conscientious, the exhibition will be on view from June 22 – August 3, 2007 at **jen bekman**, located at 6 Spring Street between Elizabeth and Bowery, New York.

Jen Bekman will host an opening reception for the artist on **Friday, June 22, from 6:00 – 8:00pm** at the gallery.

A New American Portrait features photographs by Christine Collins, Jen Davis, Benjamin Donaldson, Amy Elkins, Peter Haakon Thompson, Todd Hido, Alec Soth, Brian Ulrich, and Shen Wei. Their portraits, environmental, posed, and self-portraits among them, express the wide range of practice in modern American portraiture. Mr. Colberg observes: "A portrait lives in the interaction between the photographer and the sitter, a relationship which banishes any notion of objectivity. The work included in this exhibition explores, and at times exposes, this fragile intriguing dynamic."

These photographs illustrate the inherent contradictions in contemporary portraiture, as seen from a distinctly American point of view. While they appear to be "honest" representations, some revealing and confessional, in truth the subjects exist within narratives and environments carefully constructed by the photographers. Gallery director Jen Bekman comments, "Alec Soth's *Bonnie* smiles sweetly while holding her photograph of an angel, serene in her faith, having just shared a Bible passage with Soth condemning people to hell for their sins. Soth's presence, however, remains as it does in all his work: compassionate rather than condescending. In an untitled portrait from Ulrich's *Thrift* series, a young girl assumes a Classical pose amid the glare and chaos of a shopping mall. Hido's portraits are suffused with sadness and sexuality, ripe with a mysterious narrative. Davis's self-portraits brutally confront our abiding obsessions with thinness and desirability. The eighteen portraits in this exhibition explore potent themes and emotions which shape contemporary America: sexuality, gender, desire, heroism, consumption, fear, class, hope and loneliness are all in the mix."

A New American Portrait at **jen bekman**, 6 Spring Street.

Hours: Wednesday through Saturday, noon – 6pm or by private appointment.

For images or more information, please contact **Michael Duong: 212.219.0166** or press@jenbekman.com.

Since its inaugural exhibition in March of 2003, **jen bekman** has attracted the attention of critics, museum curators and collectors alike. Gallery artists and exhibitions have been featured in publications such as *ARTFORUM*, *The New York Times*, *Interior Design*, *W Magazine*, *The Village Voice* and *New York Magazine*. The gallery also has a well-established online presence, having been featured on sites such as Curbed, Daily Candy, Gawker, and Gothamist. Ms. Bekman, the gallery's founder and director, is the editor of the popular design weblog, *Personism*, bringing the gallery and its artists to the attention of an even broader audience of designers, architects, and magazine editors.

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