

Art review: Frank Paulin at Duncan Miller

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Frank Paulin's first L.A. show at [Duncan Miller](#) in 2005 introduced a fine, little-known street photographer equipped with both the poetic instincts and quick reflexes required of the genre. Now the gallery unveils another facet of Paulin's talent: color.

Paulin, now 84, hit his stride in the mid-1950s, not long after studying under Harry Callahan and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy at the Institute of Design in Chicago. He shot in both black and white and color, but rarely printed in color because of the expense. The most vibrant work here was shot a half-century ago but never printed until this year.



Many of the pictures read like montages, layered assemblages of motion, reflection, and signage, the choreography of the city (usually Manhattan) stilled for a brief, dynamic moment. In "Coca-Cola" (1956), a pyramid of oranges rests on a lunch counter next to grape and lime beverage dispensers. An aproned attendant's face is profiled beneath a gleaming neon Coca-Cola sign, and framed on one side by a window's filmy reflection of cars and buildings, and on the other by a jaunty punctuation of product names: Kleenex, Chunky, Tums, Ponds, Milky Way.

In these keenly observed synchronies, Paulin captures the sacred rubbing up against the profane, the ordinary yearning toward the ideal. Window shoppers reach toward the glass as if to test the threshold between everyday and dream. Reflections interweave the solid and diaphanous. Like time capsules newly unearthed, these photographs conjure the rhythms, textures and tones of a period long since past.

– Leah Ollman

Duncan Miller Gallery, 10959 Venice Blvd., (310) 838-2440, through Nov. 28. Closed Sunday through Wednesday. www.duncanmillergallery.com

Photo: "Coca-Cola" (1956). Credit: Frank Paulin, from Duncan Miller Gallery.