



Roe Ethridge, *Moon*, 2003.

Roe Ethridge
 Andrew Kreps, through May 15
 (see Chelsea).

Printing to the size of an easel painting; digital manipulation; scratching, painting and drawing on the surface—what hasn't been done to a photograph? Rather than exploring new techniques or laying claim to a signature subject—such as, say, Bernd and Hilla Becher's blast furnaces or Diane Arbus's "freaks"—Roe Ethridge takes a different tack and proceeds in several directions at once.

By following the checklist, viewers encounter first a bright Pop image of Harry & David products housed within a white frame; next, a black-and-white photo of the moon framed in dark wood; third, an Atlanta freeway printed in the same anemic style as the current Prada campaign, followed up by another white-framed Pop image, an enlarged close-up of Ethridge's former girlfriend and so on.

Considered individually, not one of the photographs is stellar, or even terribly interesting. But viewed together, they work. The contrasting frames and subtle shifts in scale might seem incidental, but as you circle the room, they become increasingly jarring. As Ethridge changes from one frame style to another and from black-and-white to color—as well as from commercial to astronomical to biographical subjects—he challenges both the idea and the relevance of creating a cohesive body of work.

He's not alone in favoring this approach. Take a painter like Laura Owens, for whom committing to a single subject or style is a *recherché* notion. By refusing to settle down, Ethridge is increasingly discovering the ways photography, too, can be variable, and how this medium that often looks so tidy can also be untamed.—*Martha Schwendener*