

ANTICIPATION OF BECOMING



AMY WILTON | KAREN LEWIS | JOCELYN LEE

While the Canvas has been focused mainly on painters, this issue marks the expansion of the concept of a canvas as a support for artwork in a variety of media—in this case, photography. One of photography's most notable qualities is its apparent ability to arrest time and create instant memories, which becomes especially obvious when photographing children. Amy Wilton, Karen Lewis, and Jocelyn Lee have explored this subject extensively and have created sensitive studies of the ever-changing human condition. The images presented here portray children living in their own worlds, trying out adult roles, and embodying the awkwardness of adolescence.

JOCELYN LEE

Jocelyn Lee has exhibited her work nationally, including at the National Portrait Gallery, DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Smith College Museum of Art, the Rose Art Museum, and the Portland Museum of Art. Her work is in the collections of the Yale Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, among many other institutions. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2001. She is represented by Pace/MacGill Gallery in New York City.



Jocelyn Lee has an almost uncanny ability to capture human vulnerability. She has done so in *Children's Games* (1990–1994), a series of photographs that feature children playing, mostly unsupervised, in her Austin neighborhood, and *The Youngest Parents* (1992–1996), which documents young parents and their children in Texas and Maine and which was later turned into a book. One ongoing series explores emotional connections to the world around us, and another portrays people close to the artist, mainly in the nude. Within the latter series it is particularly the arresting images of adolescents that transfix and touch us.

The poses reveal the physical and emotional awkwardness of the teenager. The subjects do not yet fully inhabit their budding adulthood, and everything seems slightly out of proportion. Aware of Lee's camera, they are themselves, but they don't quite know who that is yet. *Saidiya Watching TV* is part of a group of photographs Lee took of children and adolescents watching television—an attempt to capture their visceral reactions with as little posing as possible. Yet her youthful neighbor seems only partially absorbed as she self-consciously glances toward the camera. A strap has slipped and her slightly overweight body fills out her clothes amply, playfully mirrored by the overstuffed

sofa cushions that surround her. Additionally, the expanse of bare wall behind the girl adds extra weight to the lower half of the composition.

For some observers, Lee walks a narrow line, between voyeurism and exploitation on the one hand and empathy on the other. But her work is always empathic and respectful of her subjects. Her compositions make sensitive connections between background and subject, and the attention she spends on beautiful surfaces—whether skin or fabric—give her psychological portraits a quiet dignity. **MH+D**

For more information, see Resources on page 83.

Saidiya Watching TV, 2007, chromogenic print, 40" x 30"

THE CANVAS

