

ARTnews

Reviews: National

Jean-Baptiste Mondino

M+B

Los Angeles

Known for his music videos and fashion spreads, French photographer Jean-Baptiste Mondino found inspiration in the guitar for his first solo show Stateside. While most of the 41 images in "Guitar Eros" focused on the instrument itself, the best presented beautiful models and famous musicians fondling and posing with the guitar as if it were a talisman.

Electric Lady (2002) embodies the show's conception of eros. The black-and-white C-print depicts a young topless woman, cigarette dangling from her lips, clutching an electric guitar. *M* (2002) frames Madonna in an eerily lit nighttime street scene. The picture of the pop star in a cowboy hat and jeans, plucking her acoustic guitar, was taken during the same shoot that produced the cover of her album *Music*, but it has the feel of an unforced snapshot. Mondino captured similarly relaxed moments with Keith Richards and Tom Waits. In *Honky Tonk Girl* (2001), the guitar is a pretty prop for a pretty girl, but the spontaneity is missing.

The 27 portraits of guitars without human accompaniment were casually taped to one gallery wall, but Mondino's adulation of his subjects was clear. Backlit Fenders and Telecasters looked pristine. A few were artfully broken or reclining, but most were shot straight on, suggestively erect. If Mondino did not quite encapsulate the history of rock 'n' roll through these images, he did convey the idea of the guitar as both a source of inspiration and an object of wish fulfillment.

—Richard Chang



Jean-Baptiste Mondino, *M*, 2002,
C-print mounted on dibond Plexi, 42" x 51". M+B.

Willem de Kooning,
Seated Woman

US \$6.00 CAN \$8.00



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