

PLEASE  
2011 Ongoing

PLEASE is a photographic series recreating the last sixteen paintings that Édouard Manet painted as he was dying of syphilis. Manet's sixteen paintings were diminutive in size and each depicted a bouquet of fresh flowers in glass vases. For the photographic series, each vase has been remade by hand by a glass blower, and each flower arrangement has been meticulously researched, reproduced, and replicated flower by flower, stem by stem, bloom by bloom and photographed in the same position that each rests in Manet's original paintings. Further, the photographs have then been enlarged to the exact dimensions of the existing Manet paintings. For the exhibition at The Contemporary, Austin, curated by Heather Pesanti, all sixteen photographic reproductions and ten vases are viewed after entering a labyrinthian Chinese Box installation wallpapered in a faux marble pattern and the ultimate display affords two period style cast iron mirrors creating an infinity mirror effect of the photos and vases. The hand blown vases are displayed on an antique table from the same period that the paintings were painted, empty and as objects in and of themselves between the infinity mirrors and flanked by the photographed flower arrangements. Further, the blooms of the flowers used in the photo shoot have been dried and each bouquet's fillings have been placed in empty Pace Picante jars and are displayed in a 19th century corner cupboard reflecting the position of the commissioning venue, Artpace in San Antonio, Texas. Lastly, there is a photo taken in the Dallas Museum of Art's Decorative Arts Floor in a replicated house originally owned by Coco Chanel. The house was eventually sold, domiciled in, and donated by Wendy and Emory Reeves in tact, with all its belongings and treasures, including one of the sixteen Manet's in their dining room. The Manet painting is missing from that dining room photo, and like the Pace Picante jars alludes to the role of collector, patron, artist, venue—something Manet was very much interested. Finally, the title is extrapolated from a Peter Schjeldahl's essay, "Édouard Manet", in which he describes the painter as a man who simply wanted to please the viewing public while at the same time tackling subjects as diverse or interconnected as wealth, remembrance, love, sex, death, loss. The installation plays on ideas of "please", both pleasure and its instructive salutation, at the same time it questions the space and the in-between of the sponsor, collector, artist, viewer, context.