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Kevin Landers

Elizabeth Dee

*545 West 20th Street, Chelsea
Through Monday*

Kevin Landers's current show, a retrospective of color photographs taken over the last 17 years, includes a number of stomach-turning images: a filthy, crumpled "I Love NY" cup acquired from a panhandler; a sidewalk grate jammed with cigarette butts and other pedestrian debris; a pile of hair wrapped around a sidewalk post; and, the coup de grâce perhaps, a close-up of a broom sweeping some unidentifiable gray sludge in a gutter.

Yet his point is not to turn off viewers. Like weathered artifacts culled from an archeological dig, the images function as a kind of survey of New York during an era in which downtown transformed itself from an immigrant and artist district to one with Whole Foods on major cross-streets and luxury high-rises on unlikely avenues like the Bowery.

Mr. Landers ignores the new arrivals and focuses on the old guard. Along with the panhandlers' cups and three-card monte stands, which he removed from their original environments and photographed against a blank background, he offers street photographs of old-timers in their clunky, unfashionable outfits; stacks of tabloid papers; and snapshots of vinyl and linoleum interiors. (A photograph of a shelf of potato chips recalls Mr. Landers's previous show, in which he created a sculptural version of the subject.)

Hung by binder clips from the walls rather than mounted and framed, the photographs reject the auction-ready status other art achieved in this same period. And while they owe plenty to color photography pioneers like William Eggleston and Stephen Shore — saturated prints, lingering on the odd, quirky object — they are grounded in a locale and moment of their own.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER