

# The New York Times

## Art Gallery Shows to See in April: David Armstrong by Travis Diehl



Installation view of "David Armstrong: Portraits." via Artists Space, New York; Photo by Carter Seddon

The first survey in the United States of the photographer David Armstrong (1954–2014) conveys calm curiosity. Not detached, but balanced, the way four blurry images of statuary, a chair, boxwood and bougainvillea, predominantly blue, green, yellow and pink, suggest the harmonized pigments of photographic prints. Armstrong's way of snapping the shutter with the subject out of focus poses a basic question: What is he looking at? He's looking at looking itself; these photographs capture the act of sight, as the artist dips into the palette of what his eyes provide.

The show is called "Portraits," and many of the pictures depict young people, mostly men, spread on cloudlike comforters in what feels like morning light, wrapped in a melancholic sense of potential, or showing their backs to the viewer. The exhibition is tautly hung; framed photos on the wall flank long vitrines displaying prints and albums of prints of fresh-faced subjects but also furniture and plants, each treated with the same delicacy. The camera is often an alienating tool, but Armstrong's lens seems to bring him closer to his subjects.