

## Must-See Art Exhibits

**Ben Gest's photographs of daily life tread the line between fiction and reality.**

Sunday Jun 01, 2008. By Justin Sondak



***Ben Gest***  
**Runs through June 28**  
at [Stephen Daiter Gallery](#)

Gest's scenes of discomfort amid suburban comfort blur the line between formal composition and candid snapshot. His lightly orchestrated, subtly manipulated subjects, from bored children to frustrated adults, embody the festering tension of small strains and day-to-day misfortunes. They're frozen in a powerful narrative, caught at the moment a satisfactory resolution is beyond reach, when you'd like to shout at the actors to turn back home, only they can't hear you. But this starkly subdued drama lies outside the mainstream. Like a clever screenwriter, Gest implicates his audience in the fate of his subjects, disrupting their routines and crowding their more private moments. Hectored by the photographer, Levi and Brad (pictured) couldn't possibly "act natural." What we mistook for documentary has become fiction, or reality-lite.