

Andy Freeberg *Guardians*

For Immediate Release

Exhibition: January 24th – March 2nd, 2013

Andrea Meislin Gallery, 534 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011



Opening reception: Thursday, January 24th, 6-8pm

Artist talk with **Clifford J. Levy:** Saturday, January 26th, 2pm

Andrea Meislin Gallery is thrilled to announce Andy Freeberg's first solo exhibition at the gallery. *Guardians* will be on view January 24th through March 2nd, 2013, with the opening reception on Thursday, January 24th, from 6 – 8pm.

Freeberg is a keen observer of environments where art and people co-exist. After photographing reception desks of Chelsea galleries in *Sentry*, and the booths of art dealers at international fairs in *Art Fare*, Freeberg takes us to Russia's great art museums - the Hermitage and the Russian State Museum in St. Petersburg, and the Pushkin Museum and State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow - where retirement-aged women guard national treasures.

In 2008, Freeberg set out to investigate Russia's evolution since his last visit there in the 1980s, but found himself intrigued by the women scattered throughout the museums, seated among the country's great works of art. Unable to separate his experience of the art from his experience of the place – an environment so deeply impacted by the presence of the women – Freeberg took out his camera.

Using a 35-millimeter camera in order to remain inconspicuous while wandering the museums - Freeberg shot these photographs without directing the women. He printed the images in a large size, some as wide as five feet. The photographs invite the viewer to enjoy the museums as he did – taking in not only the painting or sculpture, but also the relationship between the work of art

and its guardian.

In *Kugach's Before the Dance, State Tretyakov Gallery, 2009*, the guard's posture mimics that of the women in the painting. Wearing a long skirt, and seated with hands folded in her lap, she too, is demur and looks as though she could be waiting for an invitation to dance. In *Matisse Still Life, Hermitage Museum, 2008*, the guard's sweater is in harmony with the Matisse in both hue and design. Even a hint of her patterned stocking recalls the lively forms in the painting.

In conversation through an interpreter on a second trip to the museums, Freeberg learned that the women loved their jobs, and felt proud to be guarding such important pieces of history. One woman told him that she traveled three hours to work each day, and another visited the museum even on her days off. Sometimes playful and always dignified, Freeberg's lush images pronounce admiration for the guardians who so revere the art that surrounds them.

Considering photographs that investigate a viewing environment encourages a certain awareness of our own context and how we experience art. *Guardians* acknowledges the pride that these women feel in proximity to such masterpieces, asking us to tune into our own reactions. Freeberg slows down the hurried museumgoer by framing moments, inviting us to take a breath and pause – to notice the beauty not just in art, but also in the details we so often overlook.

About the Artist

Andy Freeberg was born in 1958 in New York City. After studying photography at the University of Michigan, he returned to New York, where he began making a living shooting portraits for various publications including *The Village Voice*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Time*. Freeberg's recent work focuses on environments where art and people co-exist, providing a commentary on various facets of the art world. His work has been exhibited internationally, with solo shows at Photographic Center Northwest (Seattle) and Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center (Stanford, CA). His work is in several collections including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Portland Museum of Art, and the George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography. The *Guardians* project won Photolucida's Critical Mass book award, in which a group of 200 jurors honors an artist with a monograph.