

# IMAGINE: LINGERING WITHIN AN IMAGE

By Kerry Methner / CASA

**F**ROM THE IMAGINATION OF A CAREER NEW YORK FASHION EDITOR, educator, writer, and all round creative woman comes a show at Wall Space Gallery that gleams some of Aline Smithson's best ideas and images under the label *Imagine*.

"I take photographs to allow myself and the viewer to linger a little longer within an image. I try to look for or create moments that are at once familiar, yet unexpected. The odd juxtapositions that we find in life are worth exploring, whether it is with humor, compassion, or by simply taking the time to see them," writes Smithson on her website.

*Imagine* opens September 7th, with a Saturday, September 10th artist reception from 2 to 5pm. "Showcasing her newest series *Hollywood at Home*, Aline harkens back to the days of glamour and style when movie stars were mysterious,

exciting, and exalted as legends," Gallery Owner Crista Dix explained. *Imagine* also includes images from Smithson's *Shadows* & *Stains*, a response to digital photography,



Aline Smithson

and technology. They are "handcrafted images lovingly created in a dark room filled with film, fixer and hand painted with oils," Dix continued.

Smithson, a blogger and journalist in her own right (who attended UCSB and often returns to vacation here), sat down at her computer to answer a few of CASA's questions prior to the opening.

**CASA:** *What kind of music or genre of music stimulates your creative thoughts?*

**Smithson:** I don't have a specific genre of music that I listen to when creating work, but the kind of music that creates imagery in my mind, is music I can imagine in a cinematic way, that is open ended and leaves room for my imagination. Someone I've been listening to lately is James Blake, but music by Radiohead is a good example of music that makes me think in pictures.

**CASA:** *What role does art or creativity play in our current culture?*

**Smithson:** That's a great question. I think we are moving into an incredibly creative period in history. Young people have access to so much that inspires art and ideas and imagination... today everyone is a photographer with

the advent of digital cameras and cell phones and anyone can be a filmmaker or music maker--technology has evolved to a point where it allows a broad range of participation. I also think that more

and more people are interested in the arts and there is a resurgence of illustrators, handmade objects, and an appreciation for all things visual.

**CASA:** *Do you have any mentors?*

**Smithson:** I wish I did. I am pretty much self taught--things would have been a lot easier for me if I had had a mentor. But now I am an educator myself, and work hard to mentor other photographers and build a supportive photographic community online and in Los Angeles.

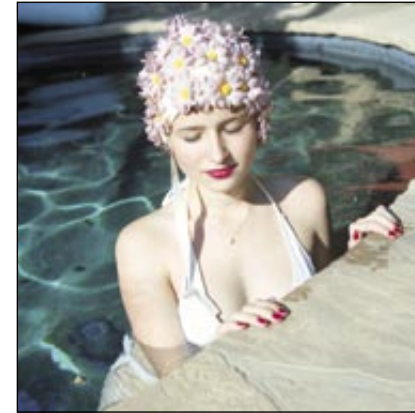
**CASA:** *What early memory of creating something can you share?*

**Smithson:** I was a child that always had a pencil, sewing needle, or a pair of scissors in my hands at all time. If I wasn't drawing cartoons, I was creating elaborate outfits for my Barbie Dolls and I continue to do that to this day--I love creating and using my hands. My love of sewing and designing doll clothes led to my career as a Fashion Editor, and my love for fashion magazines and art museums and album covers informed the way I see.

**CASA:** *How has your work history and your educational history impacted your work?*

**Smithson:** My educational history impacts the way I make work. Because I came out of college with an art background, my photography is often conceptually based, and I'm not afraid to mix medias, paint on my photographs, and take chances outside the norm of photography. My work history taught me about creating illusion, working with a group of people towards a singular visual goal, and how to treat people with respect and let them do their best work. It has also made me very comfortable working with people. I never hire professional models, but work with people I know or have been introduced to.

**CASA:** *How many pictures do you take before you feel you've grasped the*



Red Nails & Daisies by Aline Smithson

*emotion of an image?*

**Smithson:** Because I still shoot film and use medium format cameras (one is 60 years old and the other 30 years old), I really slow down and take very few images. I never take more than 3 or 4 frames to get the shot. It forces me to be very present, and commit to what I am seeing through the viewfinder. I know when it's right, I can feel it though the camera--and I truly

believe my cameras have souls...some more than others!

**CASA:** *Imagination, what role does it play in your life?*

**Smithson:** I can't imagine my life without it. When I have come up with a concept and am excited to execute it, I lie awake at night filled with ideas and can't wait to get started. I am thankful to have a vivid imagination and it has truly been the one quality that I have carried through my different careers and helped me to stand apart. My imagination is always active, for example, when I am driving, I love to look at the car next to me and image sitting in the front seat with the driver and going home to his or her life and getting this window into someone else's world.

**CASA:** *How are your images transformative?*

**Smithson:** I like to hope that my images are evocative and engage the viewer on different levels. I want the viewer to feel something--whether it be something humorous, something poignant, something profound, or simply feeling a connection to my work. In many of my photographs, I reflect on the past, or the universal emotions of love, loss, joy, and sorrow. By sharing what I know, what I think about, and what I imagine and interpret in a visual way with others, is not only transformative for me, but hopefully for the viewer.

**Wall Space Gallery** is located at 113 W. Ortega St. Contact them at 637-3898.