

Houston Press

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"Soft" Around the Edges Deborah Colton Gallery unveils an intimate look at an artistic giant

This week, the city will be awash in all things Jean-Michel Basquiat, as the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston unveils a new exhibit featuring the '80s icon's works (see Sunday, page 32). But a more intimate portrait can be found at the Deborah Colton Gallery, which presents Stephen Torton's **"...too soft for anyone I know."** The exhibit features photographs, film and mixed-media pieces that offer a glimpse into Basquiat's life. Torton was Basquiat's studio assistant, driver and friend, which provided him the unique opportunity to make the artist's life itself a work of art. Torton caught his friend in frenzied moments of creation but also more subdued times. In one photo, Basquiat stands at a window, while his girlfriend, a pre-"Like a Virgin"

Madonna, reaches toward a suspended artichoke with her lips.

"The title comes from a moment one evening, when someone came up behind Stephen and gently placed their hands over his eyes," explains Colton. "Steve couldn't figure out who it was, and said, 'Too soft for anyone I know,' turned around, and it was Basquiat. This exhibit is the communication and the celebration of his life and the soft and gentle relationship between Torton and Basquiat."

While the MFAH's Basquiat exhibit is new, Torton's desire to share his images at Colton's gallery isn't. "Steve and I have been talking about doing this exhibition for a long time," she says. "He wanted to do his show here because he's always loved the space; he stuccoed the walls in the gallery before it opened." Opening reception 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Exhibit runs through January 14. 2500 Summer Street. For information, call 713-864-2364 or visit www.deborahcoltongallery.com. Free.

— AMY PETERSON

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