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**Amy Elkins: *Elegant Violence***

**September 8 – October 22, 2011**

Opening Reception Thursday, September 8, 6-8pm



The Yancey Richardson Gallery is pleased to present *Elegant Violence*, an exhibition of portraits by Amy Elkins that continue the artist's ongoing exploration into masculine identity. In this particular project, Elkins focuses on Rugby, a brutal contact sport rich in tradition with origins dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Inspired by vintage studio portraits of rugby players from the 1870s to 1930s, Elkins set up daylight studios on the field in order to make portraits of collegiate rugby players immediately following their match. In doing so, the artist sought to capture signs of an 80-minute match that often involves intense physicality and aggressive contact without the use of pads or helmets, focusing on the subtlety in their

expression and body language, the dirt on their uniforms, and the wounds they come away with. As Elkins explains:

*"I'm interested in the balance between athleticism, modes of violence or aggression and varying degrees of vulnerability within a sport where brutal body contact is fundamental to the game. I am also interested in the history of the game and how it has long been described as both traditional and barbaric, elegant and violent."*

In her previous major body of work, *Wallflowers*, the artist's portraiture offered a reversal of the traditional male gaze. Set against mostly pastel floral backdrops and focused on the beauty, sensitivity and heightened vulnerabilities of her male subjects, the *Wallflower* portraits represented an effort to confront some of the cultural grounds underlying gender identity. Conversely, *Elegant Violence* presents athletes from Princeton, Columbia and Yale proudly emblazoned with their school colors and the fresh wounds of physical battle. Masculinity is at the fore in these works, though beneath the valorous postures a softness and sensitivity is retained by Elkins' attentive eye.

Amy Elkins received her BFA in Photography from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Her work has been exhibited internationally at the Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna, Austria, PIP International Photo Festival in Pingyao, China, Gallery Gagopa in Masan, South Korea, and in the U.S. at the National Arts Club and Carnegie Art Museum, among others. This is her second solo exhibition at Yancey Richardson Gallery.

For visuals, please contact Walker Waugh at [wwaugh@yanceyrichardson.com](mailto:wwaugh@yanceyrichardson.com).