

# ARTFORUM

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Susan Smith

55 MERCER GALLERY

Susan Smith also stresses the anonymity of her imagery. It derives from a very familiar urban sight: the vari-colored rectilinear grids of apartment interiors exposed by the removal of the building of which they once constituted a lateral wall. What is left is a sort of patchwork record of human habitation—the colors of moldings, paint, and wallpaper, the shapes of various pieces of furniture, of closets and stairways—the configurations that are shown in colors on Gordon Matta-Clark's newsprint. Smith renders them in monochrome with a dusky softness, in pastel on foamcore or in oil on wood. In a strange way they share the Mediterranean feel of Alice Adams' sculpture. The pale adobe pinkish-brown of her surfaces has the dusty grittiness of dry-brushed stucco. Her rectilinear grids are blurry and sunbleached, as though they belonged on the sides of a crumbling Southern French apartment building. Her imagery defines the flatness of the picture plane very simply by being itself flat. She modulates the spatial play within the confines of her irregular structural grid through the use of subtle variations of tone, nuances that operate like conventional shading, and rhythmically accenting her stress points through repetition. The paint or pastel is brushed on in many directions which results in a great variety of light density. A recurrent window motif is readily apparent, though it emerges to prominence like a palimpsest of an earlier painting, perhaps by Motherwell, Edwin Dickinson, or Mark Rothko.

—April Kingsley