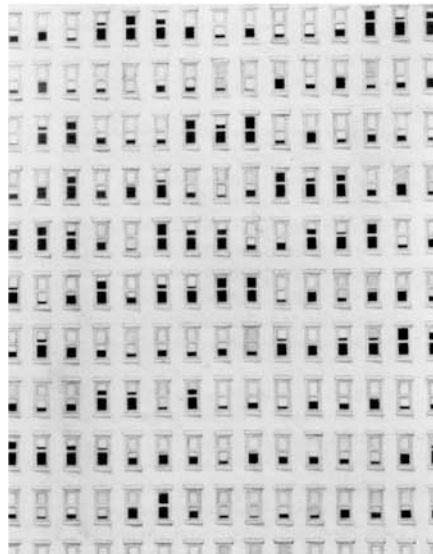


Art issues.

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Toba Khedoori

at REGEN PROJECTS, 18 January–18 February

Emptiness, manic hope, and abandonment chase each others' tails in Toba Khedoori's first one-woman show. Hybrids of architectural drawings and oil paintings, each of her three eleven-by-twenty-foot untitled paintings (all 1994) are composed of three sheets of paper stapled to the wall. Dust and dog hairs are caught in the clear wax that covers the paper, evoking nostalgia like scratches on film.

One painting depicts a grid of miniature windows in various states of completion. They fade from delicately painted shades of pink, yellow, and blue, to graphite drafts, to blank page. At first glance, one might take this painting to be a distant relative of Edward Hopper's apartment façades. Khedoori's windows, however, are disembodied from the building: There is no street on which to locate oneself, and no American interior to view. Voyeurism is implied by the shades' differing positions—open and closed, black and white—but this suggests a mathematical system rather than a revealing *mise en scène*. It is as if the viewer were located in Jimmy Stewart's apartment in *Rear Window*, but left with the pure spatial relation of a point to a plane. By completing the painting's one-point perspective, the viewer is acutely aware of his or her position as the work's point of view. But that position is nowhere: The pattern of windows continues beyond the edge of the page, and the equal shadows under the sills do not acknowledge any horizon.

The issue of time is raised by the show's second painting, of a yellow tunnel drawn in two-point perspective and running diagonally across the paper. It appears to be a building in a utopian city. When would it or did it exist? Is it a plan or a reconstruction? What social conditions inspired its design? Clearly, it is a monument to the human labor of both drawing and building. Khedoori carefully paints each brick a slightly different shade of yellow, making the hope of this utopian world more vivid. It is as if her task of painting stands in for larger systems. But the plan is left unfinished, and the skeletal drawing fades out toward the edges of the paper, suggesting the impossibility of realizing a utopian vision. Such hopeful futility permeates this work, and the entire exhibition.

The third painting in the show moves further toward unadulterated geometry. Small blue polygons hurl at the viewer in three-point perspective as if out of an infinite space: This is inner space, outer space, or perhaps the space of thought. Blue smears where polygons have been erased indicate a process of intentional action, but the logic behind it remains inaccessible. The painting represents the act of creation itself, and the sensation of being lost in space which it elicits sends the viewer back to the drawing of windows, to seek the assurance of a single point of view.

By using a different perspectival system and a different element of representation (point of view, time, space) for each of her three paintings, Khedoori creates a

dramatic model of fragmentation. Her paintings ache to be read, but eschew narrative specificity; the viewer searches from painting to painting for a sense of the whole. Like Vija Celmins, Khedoori uses representation and the painterly process to bridge abstract thoughts; her art leads to an ideal no-place. Khedoori's paintings represent heroic projects that can never be completed, because their idealism is too great. A profound silence and psychological resonance emanate from her systematic abstractions.

Ingrid Calame is an artist who lives and works in Los Angeles.

Toba Khedoori
Untitled, 1994 (detail)
Oil and wax on paper
11' x 19'
Photo: Josh White