

**Denise Green at the Art Resources Center of the Whitney Museum**

Many painters gravitate to New York, but most of them prefer to paint in it rather than paint it. Denise Green, originally from Australia, comes to New York via Paris, where she studied at the Beaux-Arts and the Sorbonne. In her recent exhibition, her second here, she showed paintings whose subject matter is some of lower Manhattan's less grand facades. However, these paintings are not entirely about buildings: their representationalism has little to do with either the photographic eye or other current conceptions of realism. Green's palette, for a start, is lush and creamy—invented. This is a clue to her style, which is alert to another dimension, that of the painterly imagination—in Green's case, a realm of stillness and silence not brought into super-realist sharp focus but slowly, coolly brushed into existence.

All but one of the paintings in the show formed series. There were a group of small watercolor sketches, luminous and immediate; a series of two-foot-square oils; and another, larger group called the "Laight Street Series." They are all of dull, neutral, ordinary brick edifices which in fact make up the view from Green's studio. She has made paintings of it that act as meditations on transience and permanence—the transience of light, shadow and reflection; the aspiring permanence implied in the materiality of the buildings.

The recurrent compositional element in all these works is the row of windows, itself a kind of series. A window of course reca-

pitulates the shape of a picture, and Green's windows are all tiny, meticulously colored, freely painted individual abstractions. But her formal treatment goes further: each window, like each painting of a series, implies a further individual space both like and different from its neighbors. As an entity, each series, especially the Laight Street group, has the character of its subject—a row of pictorial rectangles, i.e., windows. A tension is built between these complete, self-sufficient little "window paintings" and the fractional quality of the observed scene, the cityscape of fragmented, overlapping buildings. Green extends this tension to the relationship between the flat, schematically gridded exteriors of her buildings and the painterly opulence she gives the reflections and interior glimpses of her windows. Thus Green's views of monumental, material New York architecture become lyrical meditations.

*It's 9:20 A.M. in Manhattan* is the one painting which isn't part of a series. Somewhat larger than the others, it is perhaps the most realized of all, and the most austere. (It was begun before the rest of the paintings, completed afterwards.) It is about a single atmospheric moment in the appearance of the facade of an office building. The dominant motif is shadow; the windows blindly reflect the opalescent blue of the morning sky as well as the shadow of another, unseen building. Air-conditioners protrude from the windows, their shadows raking the surface of the building diagonally and adding a further serial detail to the repetition-filled image. In this painting, shadow and substance are equally real.

Singly or in series, Green's paintings are all authentic and convincing because their content is subsumed under a larger understanding of representation as a formal and transformational act.

—Ann Lauterbach



Denise Green: *It's 9:20 A.M. in Manhattan*, 1974, 60 by 84 inches; at the Art Resources Center of the Whitney Museum.