



MARIO NAVES

SUBTLE TURNS

I set out to write about the fundamental strangeness of William Hudders' paintings, which are currently on display at the Tatistcheff Gallery, but then it dawned on me that much of the strangeness was extrinsic to the pictures themselves. Mr. Hudders' still lifes and cityscapes, in contrast to so much of contemporary art, are solid and silent, maybe even a bit bland: There's nothing *outré* or flashy about them. Indeed, "strange" seems the wrong word for paintings as tempered and even as these—until, that is, one takes notice of how they unfold. The shifting compositions allow for unnervingly subtle turns in incident: The collar of a white button-down shirt rises like a phantom; an empty goldfish bowl signals uncomfortable tidings; the Empire State Building, seen up close and wrested from its context, is a teetering, malevolent force. The dead-end romanticism of these streamlined and depopulated vistas brings to mind the skewed visions of the Surrealist painter Giorgio de Chirico, particularly when Mr. Hudders portrays the Manhattan skyline: In their dreamlike precision, concentrated light, and sweet and moody blankness, these paintings show a city troubled by memory. They're strange and they're strong, too. And less surreal than we'd like to think.

William Hudders: A Place of Silence and Light is at the Tatistcheff Gallery, 529 West 20th Street, until Nov. 30.