



MARIO NAVES

William Hudders' Keen Eye Keeps Painterly Priorities In Place

Dragging Alex Katz into a review of William Hudders is unfair. It's unfair to Mr. Hudders, whose recent paintings are on view at the Tatistcheff Gallery, but Mr. Katz can only benefit from the association. Both men have similar approaches to painting, tight-lipped and laconic. Both Mr. Katz and Mr. Hudders abbreviate observed phenomenon with an eye toward not quite outright abstraction, but a recognition of it. A Hudders painting of a tree, in its terse condensation of form, could be mistaken for a Katz—but that's only one picture. The rest of the time Mr. Hudders is his own man, quietly putting into motion a dry, otherworldly art that encompasses the Manhattan skyline, the Citibank building in Long Island City, an army of clouds and a tangled length of garden hose. Possessed of an unob-

trusive poetic gift, Mr. Hudders exposes Mr. Katz as a painter whose glib deployment of style can't disguise an arrogant flimsiness of purpose.

Mr. Hudders has his painterly priorities in place. He doesn't set himself above style; he employs it as a means of bolstering vision. The paintings, syncopated to the slo-mo cadences of a dream, make solid—and still ephemeral—intimate moments; think of them as immaculately arranged glances. As you might have guessed, Mr. Hudders is only nominally a realist. When painting architecture, he's as streamlined and clean as Niles Spencer; when establishing atmosphere, he's as uncanny as Giorgio de Chirico. He hints at the surreal, but avoids its literalist tendencies by paying merciless attention to pictorial form. Note, for example, the precise manner in which Mr. Hudders situates objects in relationship to each other and to the canvas' edge—he's no

mean hand at structuring a composition. Couple that with a touch that clarifies the structure of a given object while intimating the spirit (or secret) housed within it, and you have an art that is magical and stoic, clear-headed, eccentric and recommended.

William Hudders: New Paintings is at the Tatistcheff Gallery, 529 West 20th Street, until Oct. 30.



Clean and surreal: William Hudders' *Cards*.