

The Interior Worlds Of William Hudders

by Andrew Mangravite

An interior, by its very nature, seems to invite meditation. It's enclosed space, a private world; it must be there for a reason. It must mean *something* to the person who has taken the time to draw or paint or even photograph it.

When there are figures in the interior, we wonder about the exact nature of their connection with it. When the interiors are uninhabited—as those of William Hudders are—we tend to read them as portraits of the artist as a disembodied mind.

Interiors can be elegant or homely, but they're always intellectual. Interiors engage not just our eyes but our minds' eyes, too. First and foremost, interiors are arrangements—of things in an enclosed space, of colors and shapes in an artistic pattern, of mood and emotion in a concrete form.

The current show of Hudders' work at the University City Arts League is largely given over to interiors. He seems up to the challenge, producing quiet works of intense inner power.

The smaller works ("Knife," "The Orange," "The Jar") seem almost private inquiries into the nature of their subjects. The largest ones are essentially the same questions posed in grander terms. Instead of one jar, "The Studio" contains several. That's not meant to be a joke.

It's true that the larger works contain more "props" than the smaller ones, but because there are more props—and because these props must exist in some sort of relationship to each other—the point of the work has changed. It's no longer about the existence or nature of a thing called "jar"; it's about different things existing in a space. It's about how these things strike us. It's a mood piece.

It's nice to see a show like this; it's especially nice that Hudders knows enough to keep it simple. What he loses in visual complexity, he gains in sincerity and emotional impact.

The most visual complex work in the show is probably "The Corner," and it's a simple enough idea: the corner of a wooden structure with a bucket hanging from it and, just below the bucket, a small table with a pitcher of water on it.

Hardly the sort of composition to bring tears of envy

to James Ensor's eyes, but it is undeniably pleasing. The whites of the wooden planking contain delicate modulations of color. There are contrasts of light and shadow. And the entire composition is undeniably enigmatic.

My personal favorite was "Summer Still Life," an attractive arrangement of wood moldings and glass-

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William Hudders' "The Studio": The animus of the inanimate.

ware with just a touch of landscape visible through an open window. You can almost feel that back yard, riotous with summer life, pulling your eye to it.

This is one of several paintings in which Hudders deploys a Morandi-ish lineup of glasses, bottles and beakers all wrapped up in a private colloquy. With Hudders' interiors, you always feel as though your arrival has just interrupted something.

There are a pair of formal landscapes in the show—"San Francisco," the nicer of the two, is a polite-enough aggregate of color and form with one shocking turquoise structure which pulls your eyes to the upper right quarter of the work—and a pair of portraits which did nothing for me. ▼

Paintings by William Hudders: Through April 30, at the University City Arts League, 4226 Spruce Street. 382-7811.