

ARTnews

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HEATHER HUTCHISON

Jamison Thomas

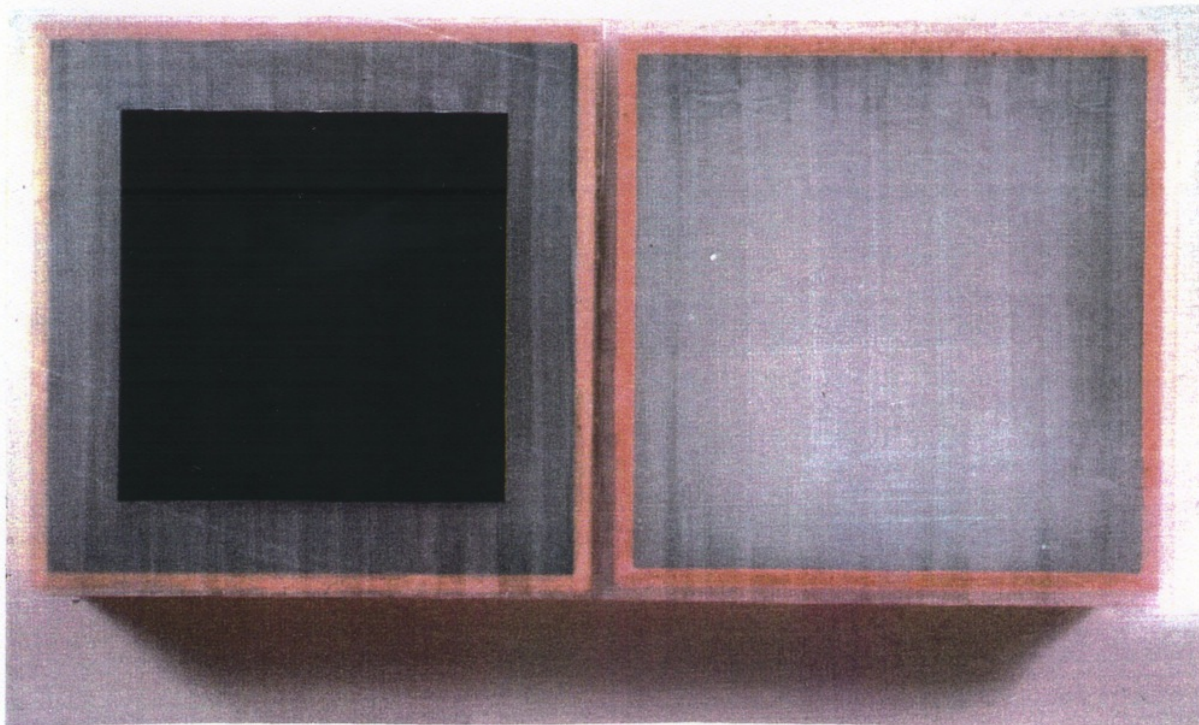
The ambiguous legacy of Minimalism—its apparently contradictory emphasis on the unadorned properties of material and an almost spiritual purity—continues to engage new generations of artists. Heather Hutchison, a young artist who made her solo debut here, exploits this contradiction, creating work that suggests at times Albers dematerialized, Noland etched on water, or a marriage of Robert Irwin and Frank Stella.

Working with square sheets of Plexiglas coated with thin layers of beeswax and, less frequently, concrete or Masonite, Hutchison plays opacity against translucence, flatness against a subtle perception of depth, matter against light. Laid over wood-box frames that protrude several inches from the wall, Plexiglas squares serve as a canvas for variously thick layers of beeswax. Hutchison may place two square boxes side by side,

one lightly coated so that its surface has a watery bluish tint, while the surface of the other resembles tar (an effect produced by mixing graphite into a thick layer of wax). In other works, slightly different thicknesses of wax create a white-on-white effect, manifesting itself as a square within a square or, in one case, an almost imperceptible target composition. In some of her latest works, Hutchison plays icily iridescent squares against squares covered with butter-textured layers of opaque concrete or Masonite.

In Hutchison's work, Minimalist reduction serves not to suppress metaphor and association but to enhance it. The basic geometry of the compositions sets off the evocative quality of the materials, which bring to mind such natural elements as light, water, ice, tar, and earth. These associations are encouraged by such titles as *Eclipse* or *Haze*. Following the lead of Eva Hesse or Christopher Wilmarth, Hutchison demonstrates that Minimalism and metaphor do not make such an odd couple after all.—E. H.

ELEANOR HEARTNEY, p. 168



Heather Hutchison, *Eclipse*, 1990, mixed media, 24¼ by 48½ by 3¾ inches. Jamison Thomas.