

ADVERTISEMENT



The New York Times | All Access

Five Times experiences.
One Times subscription.

~~\$6.25~~ \$1.50/week for your first year.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

ART IN REVIEW

ART IN REVIEW; Daina Higgins Give this articleBy **Roberta Smith**

March 3, 2006

Elizabeth Harris Gallery 529 West 20th Street, Chelsea Through March 11


The art world is knee-deep in feats of realism in both two and three dimensions, whether created by artists or by their assistants or by some form of technology. This may make it hard, initially, to appreciate Daina Higgins's idiosyncratic variation on Photo Realism: small, atmospheric, seemingly air-brushed cityscapes, mostly black and white, but sometimes delicately colored.

Most resemble lithographs in their broad spectrum of grainy grays. All are made the old-fashioned way, if you happen to be a graffiti artist: with cans of Rust-Oleum spray paint. Ms. Higgins intends to pay tribute to such artists. Her images depict the locales they haunted, including rough-looking streets, the undersides of bridges and overpasses, an auto salvage yard, a concrete retaining wall that is, in fact, tagged with the phrase "Waster of Time."

It may gradually dawn on you that these images, rarely more than 10 or 12 inches high, are made with stencils. Less apparent is that the stencils are cut from photographs taken by the artist.

Ms. Higgins's urban scenes refine the spray-can school of art, but they avoid the refinement associated with small, realistic paintings. They might almost be considered very thin, three-dimensional models of photographs, in which the camera's impartial record of tonal difference is delicately pulled apart into successive scrims of varying density. Somehow this cruder recapitulation creates a poetic awareness of the passage of light, moving through the world, bouncing off things and making visual experience fleetingly possible. ROBERTA SMITH

A version of this article appears in print on March 3, 2006, Section E, Page 35 of the National edition with the headline: ART IN REVIEW; Daina Higgins. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)

 Give this article