



Suzanne Adelman, *Untitled (Windows and Mirrors)*, 2008, archival digital print, 24½" x 17". Courtesy the artist.

Suzanne Adelman: Windows and Mirrors

Kristi Engle Gallery, Los Angeles

In the long-running love/hate relationship between painting and photography, Suzanne Adelman's recent photo collages are a passionate embrace. In each of these amply scaled works, digital snapshots of windows and mirrors are layered one atop another until the referents all but disappear, leaving swaths of color riding atop a barely representational field. These are photographs operating as paintings, right in line with contemporary abstraction in being thoughtfully built up rather than convulsively thrown down – in being, as Adelman has written, “empirical, contemporary, lived.” Yet despite this obvious concern with process and medium—with breaking the bonds of medium to possess the desired other of painting—there is something about the curdled sprays of mustard, beige, copper and rust, something about the black streaks of architecture present in so many of the works, that perfectly evokes the cheery desolation of southern California, the artist's adopted home. Referentiality hasn't been banished, just abstracted along with everything else.

What gives these pieces their uncanny effect is how Adelman manipulates plane and light to keep the viewer consistently off-center. If photographing a window introduces Renaissance notions of framing and perspective, in these works it does so in order to subvert such notions. There is no privileged position from which to wield the gaze and no depth into which the eye can travel, only a shifting, unstable image field where color, divorced from objects, becomes palpable. Here we find neither the perspectival space of traditional picture-making nor the flattened surface of Modernism, but today's postmodern hyperspace, within which, according to Frederic Jameson, “distance . . . has very precisely been abolished”—abolished by a hall of mirrors (and windows) that engulfs the viewer in color and light.

— John Rosewall