

# REGEN PROJECTS

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## BAZAAR Harper's

### Toba Khedoori

Toba Khedoori creates giant works on paper, expansive floor-to-ceiling triptychs that are unexpectedly intimate. Mixing the stiff dignity of a quattrocento frieze with traces of informality and improvisation, she paints architectural fragments, free-floating geometric shapes, trains, and cranes, and floats them against fields of white space. Rigorous and dreamy at the same time, her work is difficult to pin down, haunting you long after the first sighting.

Khedoori's subjects are deceptively simple. One recent picture features a building facade with countless windows, each distinguished by variations in color and the position of its shade. Sound a mite precious? Undercutting any such impression is the work's unruly scale and its crude stapled-to-the-wall presentation. There's also a grungy airiness: In most of her recent pictures, a wax undercoating provides an uneven textural backwash, replete with brushstrokes, dust, and stray hairs from Khedoori's dog.

"What got to me was their idiosyncratic mystery," says Klaus Kertess. "How alienated and placeless her images are, yet how beautiful. They're so carefully constructed, and yet she presents them with no regard whatsoever for their future preservation."

Having just mounted her first one-person show, at L.A.'s Regen Projects in January, Khedoori, at 30, is one of the Biennial's fresher faces. Born in Australia, she earned an M.F.A. from UCLA last year. "I'm interested in doing simple things," she says. "My materials and scale remain pretty consistent, but I try to change things around within those boundaries."

Change, in fact, is a guiding principle in Khedoori's pictures, where perspective and proportion are often quietly warped. The artist also likes to set up tensions between illusionistic depths and flatness: In one large-scale piece, a diagonal drawing of a yellow brick wall streaks across three sheets of 80-inch-wide paper like a flattened stripe lifted from an abstract mosaic. The net effect suggests something produced by a three-dimensional-computer-modeling program stricken with an eccentric virus.

Though Khedoori doesn't draw from memory, her pictures are practically an allegory about the act of remembering. Partially-rubbed-out forms and smudges of faded color punctuate their surfaces, so that each work is on one level a map of the decision-making process, a palimpsest haunted by the ghosts of routes not taken.

The practical reason for the half-erased images is the artist's choice of medium: wax-coated paper. Because she can't cover mistakes with white paint, she has to choose between throwing away a picture—which may have required a month's work—or keeping it, with its history intact.

But these spectral marks also testify to the experiments and inevitable changes that lie behind every finished image. Patiently and elegantly, they evoke the mobility of form and imbue Khedoori's work with a compelling grace.



Toba Khedoori with her paintings in her Inglewood, CA, studio. Detail of Khedoori's 11-by-20-foot "Untitled" (1993), in oil and wax on paper, appearing in the Biennial.

