

Art in America

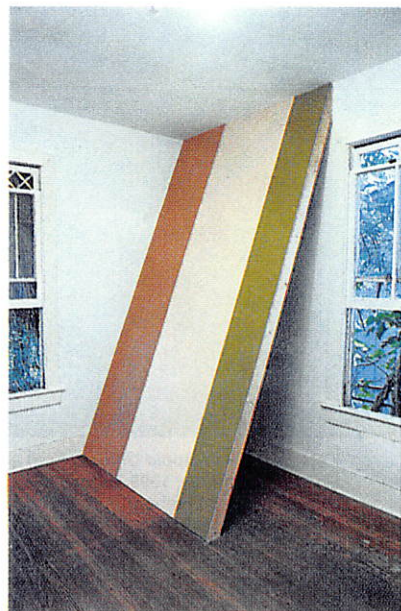
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SAN ANTONIO

Yunhee Min at Sala Diaz

Sala Diaz is an unlikely looking gallery occupying two small front rooms of a rustic bungalow in a working-class neighborhood. A recent show there provided an Alice in Wonderland experience of art bursting the seams of its environment. Was the large pastel-striped slanted object installed floor to ceiling in each room an enormous painting, too large to stand upright in the low-ceilinged space, or was it an architectural element? Actually, both. The oddly angled slabs consisted of interior housepaint on drywall supported by a framework of studs. Yunhee Min, a Korean-born artist now based in Los Angeles, aims in her works at architectural disorientation. Past efforts have included installations over windows that turned transparent surfaces into mirrored ones and forced viewers to sort out their own images from the artist's constructs.

In the first room, *Tugboat 1* was installed directly opposite the gallery's entrance. It was braced on the floor about 3 feet out into the space; it leaned backward to meet the ceiling where the obscured wall did. It stretched from the edge of an interior doorway into the corner. The dark, angular space behind the work was just big enough for a child to crawl into and hide. The piece was painted with three wide vertical bands of matte, solid color: pale pink, greenish charcoal and pale yellow. In the adjoining room, *Tugboat 2* leaned against an exterior wall next to a window.



Yunhee Min: *Tugboat 2*, 1999, housepaint on drywall, 133 by 72 inches; at Sala Diaz.

It, too, rested on the floor about 3 feet into the room and angled back to the ceiling, carrying the eye upward with broad vertical stripes of salmon, pale pink and olive green.

The works somewhat resembled gigantic color chips propped up to test a decorating scheme, and appropriately so, for Min rescued her colors from the reject bin at paint stores. They are custom-mixed hues that failed to please the customer. Min stated in a handout that these paints interest her because of their relationship to the real world and because of their orphaned status. Like the false walls she wedged into these small rooms, they failed at their utilitarian ends. As art, though, they finally had their day. The works seemed to invade the humble spaces they inhabited, bent on reconnecting with their material purpose and adding up to something more.

—Ann Wilson Lloyd