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ELLEN GRONEMEYER and MICHAEL HAKIMI

By HOLLAND COTTER

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*Andrew Kreps Gallery
525 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
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Andrew Kreps has a healthy eye for the unobvious: art that stands back a little, takes time to get to know. The work in this two-person show is a good example of that dynamic.

Ellen Gronemeyer's smallish paintings have a scratchy, built-up look, as if layers of color had been alternated with layers of black, or color had been etched into black. Her images of salonlike rooms furnished with pictures, or of cartoony heads or objects, seem to be viewed through static or from an obscuring distance. The colors stay rich, even when covered up. The results are a little like Vuillard's homely Symbolist interiors, or Louise Fishman's striated abstract paintings of the 1970s, full of locked-up light.

Michael Hakimi's work on paper has, by contrast, no surface to speak of. It's flat, matte, air-brushed. If Ms. Gronemeyer's painting is about tunneling into architectural space, Mr. Hakimi's is about seeing architecture from the outside. One piece in the show is a cut-out of what could be an urban skyline, but hung upside down and toasted around the edges with dark spray paint: it's like a reflection of a damaged city, but a reflection you might wear like a cape.

Other pieces look like aerial views of highly abstract elevations: circles and squares connected by unexplained wires, everything liquid and floating. I was reminded of Ricci Albenda's wonderful, illusionistic installation of animated architecture at the gallery earlier in the season. At first you had to give yourself reasons to look at it; nothing seemed to be happening. Then you saw that the space you were in was soundlessly moving.