

ARTnews

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Olive Ayhens Gary Tatintsian

by Cynthia Nadelman



Olive Ayhens, *Urban Strata*, 2004, oil on canvas, 84" x 58". Gary Tatintsian.

Olive Ayhens is easily excused for eliciting nostalgia for the East Village of the 1980s. Her well-painted, deliberately unruly neo-expressionist scenes of New York often have several focal points, which enable Ayhens to capture the topsy-turvy life of the city.

In *Bristle Cones on the Balcony* (2003), Ayhens focuses on the specific workings of urban and apartment life by including rooftop and behind-the-walls electrical cables. These are simply elements of a larger whole, as are the pigeons on one rooftop. Buildings and traffic patterns below appear helter-skelter, while a rickety-looking subway elevation heads off toward a bridge over a river.

In *Urban Strata* (2004), the viewer's perspective is from both inside and outside the Auto Show at the Javits Center. Little caricatured people, funky cars, escalators, and camouflaged soldiers are seen through plate-glass windows. Airy interiors contain modernist exteriors. And a rooftop view of the city

contains wires in the foreground and yellow cabs snaking up an avenue. It is a fun house and a tour de force.

Turning away from the city's cacophony and intensity, Ayhens paints *Dream Studio* (2003), a single structure on a beach at night, lit from within. Its garage-type door opens up one whole wall to the outdoors, where there are chairs perched on the beach. The painting seems to ask, Doesn't the artist deserve such a refuge?