

ART IN REVIEW

ART IN REVIEW; 'Kismet' -- 'The Unexpected Connection'

By Ken Johnson

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The Work Space

96 Spring Street, SoHo

Through Sept. 14

The Work Space, a gallery in a law office, presents another in a long series of group exhibitions of mostly young and emerging artists. The five in "Kismet" all work serially, but the show is otherwise more playfully contradictory than thematically unified. In his grid paintings Richard Kalina combines torn paper, painted lines and unpainted linen to exactingly ordered but sensuously tactile and eye-ravishing effect. His sensibility appears to be shared by Gwenn Thomas's gridded collages of torn paper and scraps of felt. But her pictures turn out to be photographs of collages printed in slightly dim colors on canvas: virtual collages that wryly comment on Modernism's love affair with raw materials.

Rob Wynne and Curtis Mitchell toy with photography on the verge of illegibility. In Mr. Wynne's "Seven Deadly Sins," black, photographic silhouettes taken from art-historical sources resemble Rorschach blots. In colored felt-covered frames with titles in block letters, they comically conflate Christian, Freudian and Pop Art traditions. Mr. Mitchell employs unorthodox processes to comment on the transparency of the medium. His large, satiny

print "Six Beers and a Shirley Temple," presented like a rug on the floor, seems to depict glowing cellular forms in black, microcosmic space, until you recognize the meandering adult and children's shoe prints that actually produced the imagery.

"Pavilion Drawings," cartoon pictures of templelike facades made in black ink lines and intense orange and green by Elisabeth Kley, hark back to the faux-juvenile style of Paul Klee and the early, commercial illustrations of Andy Warhol. They add a slight but charming whimsy to this cheerfully pluralistic show. KEN JOHNSON