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Art in Review

By KEN JOHNSON

ART GREEN

Cue Foundation

511 West 25th Street, Chelsea

Through March 28

Fans of the Hairy Who take note: Art Green was a member of that influential group of six graduates of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, who exhibited their formally acute, cheerfully vulgar, Pop-Surrealist works in the Windy City in the late 1960s. Mr. Green produced cartoonish, trompe l'oeil abstract paintings. Jim Nutt, the group's best-known member, was the guest curator for this absorbing exhibition, Mr. Green's first New York solo since 1981.

Made with a meticulous touch in luminous, confectionary colors, his new paintings assert a kaleidoscopic complexity whose order takes considerable time to figure out. On star-, diamond-, circle- and otherwise eccentrically shaped panels -- as well as on rectangular ones -- representations of ceramic tiles, panes of glass, pieces of masking tape, interwoven colored ovals and wood-grained inner frames are intricately layered. Shadows of airplanes, birds, scissors and other objects add more illusory layers. In some, a much enlarged woman's finger with a glossy red nail rises up from the bottom of the picture.

In all this, Mr. Green plays extensively with illusions of semitransparency, so that you are often unsure whether you are seeing through one layer to another or seeing one layer painted atop the other.

There are also ambiguous relations between two and three dimensions. Like the famous duck-rabbit image, which you can see as one or the other animal, but not both at the same time, Mr. Green's paintings conflate contradictory illusions to visually gripping, mind-stretching effect. KEN JOHNSON