

# Winter Curry

William Hudders at Tatistcheff

**By Maureen Mullarkey**

WILLIAM HUDDERS put up a handsome show, his first with Peter Tatistcheff in the new Chelsea space. His plant paintings—they resist the term still life—have appealed to me for as long as I have known them. Here, too, were several depopulated cityscapes painted for their own sake, rather than as backdrops for greenery. The arrangement offered a welcome opportunity to come to terms with the hint of eccentricity that runs through Hudders' oeuvre.

Mario Naves, writing in the *New York Observer*, made reference to the strangeness of them. "Strange" is a good word to start with. It points us in the direction of uneasiness, toward something out-of-kilter, akimbo, in these supposedly matter-of-fact depictions. After this exhibition, I know what it is that unsettles. Hudders is not a realistic painter, despite the superficially straight-up realism of his images.

Hudders is a fantasist. Possibly, this is a lingering symptom of his having paid the bills, once upon a time, by working for Jeff Koons in his studio. But I think not. His tendency toward schematic simplification is too authentic; his gift for pattern and taste for the contest between flat stylization and the 3-dimensional realities of his motifs are too compelling.

My guess is that Hudders is a surrealist who has not owned up to it yet. What else could explain a painting like *Night Music*? There is an odd disjunction between quite conventional—if oversized—apples and lemons at the base of a cunningly reinvented plant. We've seen the fruit a thousand times before. But those leaves! Diagrammatic and monumental, they are close in spirit to the vegetation of Henri Rousseau. Those lush, nonconforming greens come from a fantasist's palette, not a naturalist's. Tell me Hudders' greenery does not remind you of *The Dream*.



*Night Music*

Hudders' formal strengths are those that tip toward the totemic and the Douanier's simulated primitivism. The bent, decorative forms of Hudders' house plants are sedate, urban cousins to Wifredo Lam's Caribbean tobacco leaves. Behind both are the planes of African sculpture joined to a modern design sense. If he is interested in resolving tensions between the real and the surreal that appear in his work, Hudders might call in the ghost of Lam as a consultant.