



HARRIET KORMAN is about thirty; her first one-woman show was at LoGiudice in the fall of 1972. This second show is good, one of this year's best in its own modest, youthful way. Korman's paintings are very simple. What's amazing about them is not that she does so much with so little but that she does much with so little with such nonchalance. And the nonchalance isn't a negative quality, because the results aren't sloppy or insubstantial.

Korman's method is immediately apparent. She goes over the surface of each painting three times: first she makes a series of horizontal lines a few inches apart, alternating blue and black crayon. Then she covers the surface with one coat of white paint, thin enough that the lines show through. Finally she marks along the crayon lines with a palette knife, scraping off

patches of the white paint. The first two layers are connected, brought together by the third, which is simply a process of removal and not a layer of material in itself. But the scraping marks are crude and emphatic; ironically, they are more substantial than the material they cut through. The marks are random, the most nonchalant part of the process. Sometimes they are fairly regular along each line. But often they shift from a staccato to connected zig-zag, to wavy line. They remain vertical or spread on a diagonal slant; they lengthen or shorten. Korman works within a predetermined system, but completes her surfaces with a certain disregard for this system; the process itself makes the system more flexible than one would expect. The paintings are not reworked or corrected; "good" and "bad" marks appear on the same surfaces. If Kor-

man seems indifferent in her changing marks and lines, the point she makes is that individually they don't matter much. Her method is blatant and flimsy but it's the final, combined effect that she's after.

That effect is not flimsy; the layers and marks fluctuate—like breathing—between fragility and robustness. This pulsation pulls you toward them and holds the attention. So finally, after the speed and nonchalance, Korman's abstraction is concerned with a contemplative stasis. In this she is probably indebted to Agnes Martin, but her work is denser and not as taut. And Korman's touch is confident and inattentive where Martin's is often painstakingly cautious. Given the pervasive influence of Martin's work, Korman is one of the few painters to have taken it an independent step further.

Roberta Smith, Art Forum, 1975