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Review Betty Woodman at David Kordansky Gallery



Betty Woodman's "The Chartreuse Table." (Brian Forrest)

By SHARON MIZOTA
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Betty Woodman is best known as a ceramicist, but her work is perhaps more engaged with painting. In an exhibition of exuberantly colored, hybrid works at David Kordansky, the 84-year-old artist plays with her signature vase form, popping it in and out of the picture plane with joyous abandon.

The show is titled "Illusions of Domesticity," and Woodman's references are the traditional framing devices of still-life painting: windows, tables and rugs. The casual brushwork and high-keyed palettes of Matisse's domestic interiors come to mind, as do the spatial tweaks of Cezanne's tabletops.

Large ceramic vessels decorated in abstract patterns sit on the floor in front of painted canvas "windows," rest on eccentrically designed wooden tables or emerge from the center of painted "rugs." Sometimes, as in "The Red Window," the shape of the ceramic echoes a blank silhouette on the painted surface, as if the object has jumped off the canvas. In "The Chartreuse Table," Woodman places a vase, complete with abstract flowers, on a wooden shelf that extends a painted table almost seamlessly into real space. It's fun to decipher what is "real" and what is illusion, but even more satisfying to realize that Woodman thoroughly collapses such distinctions in an ecstatic, overall rhythm.