

WASHINGTON POST REVIEWS JOYCE YU- JEAN LEE'S SHOW "PASSAGES"

Most of the "Travelogue" photographs in Joyce Yu-Jean Lee's "Passages" were also made in Europe, but the shots feature neither open spaces nor abundant light. Exhibited in a dark, curtained room at Hamiltonian Gallery, and illuminated by pinpoint spotlights, the small glossy images focus on windows, skylights and peepholes. The pictures are sometimes art- or architecture-historical, featuring details of such buildings as Rembrandt's house in Amsterdam or the Daniel Libeskind-designed Jewish Museum in Berlin. When Lee photographs the Great Wall of China (her one non-European subject), she presents a tightly circumscribed view, not the usual attempt to represent the structure's vastness. Although some of the structures she photographs are one of a kind, Lee strips them to basic elements: shape, opening, light. The result is ominous yet enticing. The tight apertures suggest both entrapment and escape, much as they balance darkness and light. These are postcards from some sort of edge.

The contrast is apparently one of Lee's concerns. Behind another curtain are two video/performance pieces, "Last Light" and "First Light." In the former, projected on two walls, a man and a woman react differently when a block of light appears and then expands, crowding them. It's less compelling than "First Light," which is projected



on the floor. In this seven-minute loop, a woman is contained inside a circle of light. She looks

up, as if trapped in a hole, searching for a way out. It's an elementary mime exercise, but the downward perspective makes the sequence unusually powerful. Will the woman escape? Is the circle of light a prison window or an escape hatch? Unlike most video-art pieces, "First Light" packs sufficient drama

to make such questions interesting.

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