

ON ART

Like the Floor of Old Kitchens

William Zimmer

**Donald Sultan
John Mendelson
Artists Space
105 Hudson St. (to Feb. 26)**

If Cy Twombly trafficked in recognizable objects, they might resemble the spindly tables that pervade Don Sultan's paintings. Sultan hacks his nefarious shapes into asbestos squares, and his large works are tiled fields like the floors of old kitchens, with white squares outnumbering the black. He proceeds to provoke a tornado on this field; the tables tumble, there are shapes resembling leaves, and

small proto-geometric shapes like runts from an Al Held litter. In contrast to the gouged elements, Sultan will scribble with a pencil or paint, or dabble in mosaic. The table acquires a life through repetition: sometimes it is graceful, elsewhere it lumbers. The attentive might discover the one "puzzle" piece where you are allowed to "remake" the work by trying to fit relatively square pegs into relatively round holes.

John Mendelson's anecdotal paintings might be stills from B movies. You don't exactly know what is going on but you can imagine plots. Most are of people lashing out at each other. Shifting gears to a more benign mode, Mendelson silhouettes ochre figures against dark green grounds. These are dream images, like a woman dousing a pair of dice from a watering can.