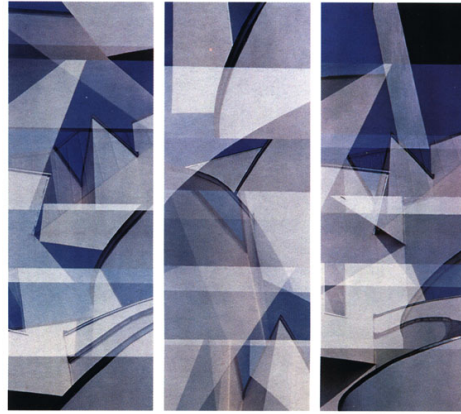


O F R E A L I T Y

says it works fine. The computer is a convenient tool to remove unsightly blemishes from an image or occasionally to move a piece around, but she's not dependent on it. "I have an incredibly good memory and I know where the major shapes are going to go," she says. "When I'm photographing, certain compositions look perfect—and I can always find them. Years ago, I used a wide-angle lens to get more of the building in and pay homage to the architect. Now I'm focusing on details and going back to abstraction, which is the way I like to paint."

She isn't sure how she should describe herself—so different is her work from that of photographers who seek to represent a building as explicitly as possible. Okun seems more concerned to look beyond the surfaces to discover the inner essence, and to evoke what is so often missing from two-dimensional images: spatial qualities and the feelings one experiences in walking around. Architecture has the capacity, like people, to awe and excite, to soothe and provoke. It should be a treat, not just for the eyes, but all the senses, and should elicit an emotional response. Some have found a cinematic quality to Okun's work, deriving from her early work as an experimental filmmaker, and it's interesting to reflect that, in its early years, the cinema had a strong influence on artists and architects.

Okun was an all-rounder as a student, and she's gone back to exploring different ways of expressing her feelings about the art of architecture. Scanning an image in the computer intensifies the colors, and she used to tone these down to achieve a more lifelike impression. Frank Gehry's Vitra Furniture Museum in Germany is a study in silvery grays that Whistler would have admired. More recently, she began to create Iris prints (standing for Intense Resolution Imaging System) in which the colors often achieve a psychedelic extravagance. She has used charcoal for blurry drawings that express the movement around buildings, and has created a visual shorthand of architecture by drawing on white walls. A similar abstraction finds its way into cut-outs of colored plastic that are sand-blasted to achieve opacity. Lined up on a shelf, these shapes suggest a row of figures conversing animatedly together. Her latest exhibition, at the Craig Krull Gallery, comprises highly



abstracted images of Bergamot Station, which has become a major hub of the arts, and demonstrates how skillfully obsolete industrial facilities can be given a new, vital role. It's an appropriate subject for Okun, whose special talent is to change our perceptions and reveal hidden treasures.

Above: "Vitra," Iris Print, J. Okun © 1997

Below: "Exeter Cathedral," J. Okun © 1997

J E N N Y O K U N

by Michael Webb