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Lively arts

art

8 Is Enough

A SMALL show of "intimate" drawings by Farid Haddad fills an equally small room at Gallery 700 (700 N. Milwaukee St.) through May 17.

But though the intent is as limited as the exhibition space, the total effect is considerably more interesting than the volume of the enterprise would indicate.

Haddad, an assistant professor of art at UWM, moves in these eight, 22 by 30 inch works toward a greater concern with subtle surface effects, as achieved through the use of graphite, dry pigment and pastel on paper.

Since the pieces are interrelated, one can expect to find the same symbols shuffled, reiterated and manipulated — and this is precisely what happens here.

Haddad's favored devices are the triangle, the pyramid and the horizontal line.

Put together, they give a curiously architectonic sense to drawings that are otherwise very free and flowing, with a heavy dependency on visual accident and understated nuances of texture, hue, reflectivity and pencil stroke.

The triangular forms suggest cornices, the horizontal lines, skies and foundations. Sometimes the effect is tomblike, sometimes simply urban, with an emphasis on interior as well as reflected light.

Color is frequently used in an illusory rather than a decorative sense, and chalk is employed to reduce the luminosity of the graphite.

This is, as Haddad put it in an informal interview, more work to "commune with" than to be shocked, startled or diverted by.

As such, it has quite a lot to offer to the viewer who is willing to give as much as he or she gets.

J.A.