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Art: Show

By MICHAEL BRENSON

Nolde Banziger (Littlejohn-Smith Gallery, 133 Greene Street): Nolde Banziger is a 39-year-old, Swiss-born painter who has been living in the United States since 1977 and who sees New York very much through tourist eyes. Like many Europeans before him, he is fascinated by the skyscrapers, glass, light and glamour of New York City. He is also fascinated by poster- and graffiti-ridden city walls that assert the existence of people for whom bright lights and rising steel is experienced in terms of exclusion and violation.

Like many other artists interested in the bombardment of conflicting information, Banziger works from photographs. He takes pictures of the high tech, fashion-conscious world of midtown Manhattan and Wall Street, then uses them as the basis for glossy, coolly colored, meticulously detailed images. Whatever human presence existed in the photographs is usually absent from the paintings. What the artist seems to be after here is the glamour and deceit of money and power.

Banziger also takes photographs of New York City walls, which he silk-screens onto canvas in black and white. In each work in the show, the precise world of the rich and famous is superimposed on these blown-up, shadowy walls, where no images are clearly delineated, and where images become words.

There are real possibilities here, but there are also real dangers. When the ironies are this facile, they automatically arouse suspicion. The kind of contrast Banziger is working with has to create a spark and it has to provoke the kind of insight that is not available to New Yorkers every day. The worlds of power and powerlessness need to be able to interact in a way that allows something to happen. As long as the two worlds are kept separate, I am not sure this is possible. (Through Sept. 18.)